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ABSTRACT

This facilitator's guide explains how to lead a series of five sessions (study circles) designed to foster public dialogue and problem solving among citizens interested in meeting the challenges of community growth and development. The document begins with an introduction to the concept of study circles that examines the following: definition of growth, ways study circles can foster growth, features and benefits of study circles, ways of making the most of study circles, and ground rules for useful discussions. Presented next are materials for leading discussions on the following topics: ways growth is changing the community; reasons for the changes the community is experiencing; options available for addressing growth issues; ground rules for meeting with public officials; and actions the community can take to shape its future. Concluding the guide are the following: glossary; tips for facilitators (help practitioners know what to expect, learn as you go, use the views expressed, manage the discussion); organization of study circle programs (overview of study circles, organizing study circles on growth, organizing for action, involving public officials); and resources for further discussion and action (list of 38 organizations and 13 websites and annotated bibliography of 31 publications). The companion citizen's guide contains the same materials, minus the facilitator notes and information. (MN)

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SMART TALK FOR GROWING COMMUNITIES

Meeting the Challenges of Growth and Development

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A guide for public dialogue and problem solving

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SMART TALK FOR GROWING COMMUNITIES

Meeting the Challenges of Growth and Development

A guide for public dialogue and problem solving

Congressional Exchange *A project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc.*

CONGRESSIONAL EXCHANGE
1120 G Street NW • Suite 730
Washington, DC 20005
Phone 202.393.1441
Fax 202.626.4978
E-mail congex@congex.org

Congressional Exchange (CX) is a project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of life in the United States. CX carries out this mission by bringing citizens and public officials together in study circles—small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions—about the nation's most important challenges. CX provides technical assistance and publications for individuals and organizations who are working to promote study circle dialogue between citizens and public officials, with a particular emphasis on members of Congress.

Congressional Exchange often works in partnership with its sister project, the **Study Circles Resource Center** (SCRC). Much of SCRC's work centers on promoting the development of community-wide study circle programs organized by broad-based sponsoring coalitions and involving large numbers of participants. Contact SCRC for help with organizing community-wide study circle programs. (Please see page 38 for SCRC's contact information.)

WRITING AND RESEARCH
Harbinger Institute
Michele Archie and Howard D Terry

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE
Reem Ghandour

EDITING AND DESIGN
Two Ducks Design
Susie Duckworth
Designer
Carolyn Duckworth
Editor and Project Manager

MANAGING EDITOR AND PROJECT DIRECTOR
Patrick L. Scully

Cover Photo Credits
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INTRODUCTION

Why Should We Take Part In Study Circles On Growth?

ARE YOU...

- *Stuck in traffic?*
- *Worried about how your community will pay for new schools and sewer systems?*
- *Watching fields being turned into subdivisions?*
- *Questioning whether you can afford your own home?*
- *Afraid to open your property tax bill?*
- *Puzzled by new strips of commercial and housing development?*
- *Wondering what's happening to the way of life you cherish?*

WHAT IF...

- *The economy seems more vital than before?*
- *Newcomers are bringing welcomed energy to civic and cultural activities?*
- *The value of your home or land is on the rise?*
- *You now have more convenience and choices?*
- *You appreciate the lifestyle afforded by the new homes and housing developments?*

These are ALL signs of rapidly growing communities!

Rapid growth changes communities. It creates new choices, new problems, new opportunities, and new dilemmas. It can raise a new set of issues or sharpen old ones. These "growing pains" aren't likely to go away if they're simply left alone. That's why more and more communities are coming together in study circles to find ways of making growth work for them.

WHAT IS "GROWTH"?

Communities' growing pains often can be traced back to two main kinds of growth: One is a rapidly growing population. The other is expanding physical development—the growing, often sprawling, "footprint" that a community makes on the land.

In some communities, these two kinds of growth go hand in hand. For example, in rural areas across the country, population is growing and physical development is expanding. Many of these communities are faced with the challenge of "rural sprawl"—the effect of people building houses far apart from one another over what was once open countryside outside of town. Some people feel that this kind of growth makes it difficult to keep a small-town atmosphere and the rural feel of the surrounding landscape. The effects are felt most strongly in the fastest-growing places—those that attract retirees, serve as recreational centers, provide access to public lands, or sit at what one journalist terms "the rural limits of a commute" to jobs in a metropolitan area.

In other places, physical development is expanding faster than the population. This is true in many metropolitan areas. For example, between 1970 and 1990, population in the Cleveland area fell by 11 percent. But the urbanized area around Cleveland—the shopping centers, business districts, and housing developments—grew by one-third. In metropolitan areas across the country, central cities and older suburbs are losing population while newer suburbs, "edge cities," and brand new developments expand.

HOW CAN STUDY CIRCLES HELP?

Study circles bring people together to talk about an issue. By talking about growth, participants can gain a clearer understanding of how and why growth is happening, and what effects it's having. Participants also get new ideas about what they can do to help their community grow into the kind of place they are happy to call home.

To make progress on the issues raised by rapid growth, you need to reach out to people throughout the community. Study circles address this need by providing a place where all kinds of people can feel comfortable. Moreover, study circles can serve as springboards—participants often become more active on other community issues.

Study circles also provide a way to bring citizens together with public officials from City Hall to Congress to work on the public policy aspects of these issues. At its heart, growth is a community issue. But the solutions to growth issues can't be found or carried out strictly at the local level. Each community's situation and choices are influenced by outside forces. These include patterns of development within the region; state land use, school funding, and economic development policies; federal environmental regulations and transportation policies; and international trade agreements. Coming together in study circle sessions with public officials helps citizens understand this broader context. And public officials benefit from citizens' perspectives and ideas.

No group, whether it's a chamber of commerce, civic group, city council, county government, state legislature, or federal agency, can find the answers to growth issues alone. Study circles on growth can be an important step in bringing your community together in its search for understanding and solutions.

WHAT'S IN THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE?

The main part of the guide includes a series of five sessions that can help you move from understanding to effective action in partnership with fellow community members and government leaders.

SESSION 1 ***How is growth changing our community?***

Get to know other group members, listen to each others' hopes and concerns for your community, and talk about how growth is affecting your community.

SESSION 2 ***Why is our community experiencing these changes?***

Explore what growth looks like in your community and why it's happening.

SESSION 3 ***What are our options for addressing growth issues?***

Consider some of your options for addressing the issues that growth raises, using approaches from other communities to generate new ideas.

SESSION 4 ***Meeting with public officials***

Meet with public officials and participants in other study circles to discuss how your community might address the challenges of growth.

SESSION 5 ***Shaping the future: What can we do in our community?***

Identify individual and community actions that can help solve growth problems and move your community in the direction of your brightest visions.

You'll also find—

- A glossary that defines key terms
- Suggestions for organizing and facilitating study circles
- Resources to help you with further learning and action

WHAT IS A STUDY CIRCLE?

The study circle is a simple process for small-group deliberation. Study circles create a setting for personal learning, building community, and problem solving. Here are some of their defining characteristics:

- A study circle involves 10–15 people who come together to talk with each other about public issues. They meet regularly—usually at least three times—over a period of weeks or months and work in a democratic and collaborative way.
- A study circle is facilitated by a person who serves the group by keeping the discussion focused and asking thought-provoking questions. The study circle facilitator does not act as an expert on the issue.
- A study circle looks at an issue from many points of view. Study circle facilitators and discussion materials help participants consider different viewpoints, feel comfortable expressing their own ideas, and explore areas of common ground.
- A study circle begins by exploring participants' personal connections to an issue. The discussion then expands to consider a range of views about the issue and how it might be resolved. Finally, the study circle focuses on what individuals, organizations, and communities can do to address the issue. Study circles often prompt people to take action individually and together with other community members.

Study circles can take place within organizations such as schools, workplaces, neighborhood associations, clubs, congregations, or government agencies. In such settings, a single group of study circle participants meeting for just a few weeks can lay important groundwork for positive change.

Study circles achieve their greatest potential, however, when many are going on at the same time in the community. These community-wide programs usually have many diverse organizations as sponsors or endorsers. Organizers of community-wide programs strive to involve as many members of the community as possible in the study circles.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY CIRCLE

In a study circle, how you talk with each other is as important as what you talk about. These tips will help make your study circle enjoyable, thought-provoking, and productive:

- ***Attend every study circle session.***
  If everyone in your group makes a good effort to be at each meeting, you will build trust and familiarity. This is essential for a conversation that explores the depths of how you feel and think about the issue. And you won't feel the need to review the details of each session for those who did not attend.
- ***Be prepared.***
  Read the discussion materials before you come to each session. Each part of the study circle guide offers questions, viewpoints, and ideas to help you examine the issue. By reading the materials ahead of time, you will be ready to jump right in to the discussion. The guide also suggests simple things you can do to keep your own learning and reflection going between study circle meetings.
- ***Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion.***
  The study circle facilitator's job is to keep the discussion moving and on track. In the dictionary, the word "facilitate" means "to make easier." But participants are also responsible for "making things easier"! At the first session of your study circle, your group will set ground rules about what kind of discussions you want to have and how you want to treat each other. Stick with these ground rules and help others do the same.
- ***Remember that you are not alone.***
  If your study circle is part of a larger, community-wide program, many other study circles may be going on at the same time in your area. Join with them for a kick-off session, to meet with public officials, or for a wrap-up discussion about taking action on the issue. These joint meetings help build momentum for addressing the issue across the community. Even if no other study circles are going on at the same time, remember that others in your community are concerned about the issues that you are discussing.

GROUND RULES FOR USEFUL DISCUSSIONS

Use these suggestions as a starting point for coming up with your own ground rules to guide your study circle.

1. Everyone gets a fair hearing.
2. Share "air time."
3. One person speaks at a time. Don't interrupt.
4. Speak for yourself, not for others.
5. If you are offended, say so.
6. You can disagree, but don't personalize it. Stick to the issue. No name-calling or stereotyping.
7. Everyone helps the facilitator keep the discussion moving and on track.

SESSION 1

How Is Growth Changing Our Community?

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Break the session into three parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Explain the purpose of the study circle and what participants can do to make the most of it. Set the ground rules. (See page 3.)
- Create an open, inclusive atmosphere. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak and to meet other group members.

TO START PART 2—

- Ask a few members of your study circle to volunteer to read each view out loud.

OR

- Ask members to read the views to themselves.
- After reading the views, ask some of the "Questions to think about" listed below.

TAKE NOTES—

- Ask someone to take notes.
- Write the notes on large sheets of paper in print that everyone can see.
- Save these notes so that you can refer to them in later sessions.

(See page 26 for tips on taking notes.)

This first session lays the groundwork for the rest of your study circle. It's an opportunity to get to know other group members and share your hopes and concerns for your community. You will also talk about how your community is growing, and the changes that growth brings with it.

PART 1 Discussion starter *(30 minutes)*

- What do you like most about living here? What makes you glad you live here?
- What concerns brought you to these discussions about growth?

PART 2 How is growth affecting our community? *(60 minutes)*

Many similarities exist in the ways that communities across the country are growing and changing shape. But each community is unique, too. Your community is experiencing its own set of changes and responding to growth in distinctive ways.

Your personal experiences and perspectives are important starting points in understanding what's happening in your community. What does growth look like where you live? What effects is it having on your community?

Each of the following views is written in the voice of someone who holds that view. Use these views to start talking about how growth is affecting your community and to develop your own ideas.

VIEWS

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE VIEWS

- *Which view is closest to your own? Why? What experiences and beliefs have helped form your views?*
- *Think about a view you don't agree with. What might lead someone else to agree with that view?*
- *What points of view would you like to add?*

VIEW 1

Our town is losing its unique character.

The way our community is growing is destroying the things that make this an attractive and pleasant place to live. The strip developments with their boxy stores and big parking lots are ugly and impersonal. Houses seem to be everywhere, even on the hillsides and in the farmlands and forests surrounding town. We've lost the natural setting for our community. And we are abandoning the traditional look of our town's older neighborhoods as we build new subdivisions with row after row of similar houses with no sidewalks or front porches.

VIEW 2

The economy is thriving.

Our community's economy has picked up and this is a better place to live. New jobs and businesses have brought a sense of vitality. People have plenty of

choices about where to shop—it seems there are stores to fit every price range and every need. And new housing developments offer people the kind of homes they want at a price they can afford. With the new jobs, it seems as though our young people, who not too long ago felt they had to move away to make a decent living, will decide to stay.

VIEW 3

Traffic congestion is growing.

Our community is developing in ways that make us depend on our cars to get around. Most people don't live near where they work or go to school, and public transportation isn't available in many places. The upshot is that we're spending more time in our cars on roads that cannot handle the growing traffic. Elderly people and others who can't drive are often isolated, and many parents feel like chauffeurs to children who need rides from school to soccer practice to friends' houses.

VIEW 4

Racial and economic isolation is worse.

New suburban developments are growing and thriving at the expense of the older parts of our area. Upper and middle class people continue to move out of town and into the suburbs, while the urban core of our area becomes poorer and racially isolated. Even the older, working class suburbs are feeling the pinch because most new jobs and economic activity are in the newer suburbs.

People who live in the core urban areas find it difficult to get to the new jobs being created in the suburbs—and they often can't afford to move to where the jobs are. To make things worse, many better-off suburbs shut out low-income people through zoning codes that prevent affordable housing from being built in their neighborhoods. Whether it is intended to or not, these things create more racial and economic segregation.

VIEW 5

We're putting the environment at risk.

As development speeds up, our community is putting greater pressure on the environment. The urban area is sprawling out into the surrounding farmlands and open areas, pushing out wildlife. Roads, parking lots, and storm drains cover land that was once able to soak up water to replenish the ground water and prevent flooding. Runoff from pavement and chemically treated lawns adds to water pollution problems. More cars on the roads are polluting the air. Our community seems to be growing in ways that make this a less healthy and pleasant place to live.

VIEW 6

Newcomers are improving the community.

Some people like to complain about newcomers changing the way things "have always been," but our community has become a better place with these changes. New businesses and more services are available. More parents are active in school affairs. Community activities such as theater, town festivals, and civic clubs have received a boost of new energy. This feels like a more vibrant, active place to live than it did before.

VIEW 7

Some people are feeling economic pressure.

Parts of our town are booming, but not everyone is sharing in the benefits. People who have lived and worked here for a long time, such as senior citizens and families that depend on local jobs for their livelihoods, are getting shut out of the housing market by rising prices. And much of the new economic development—like the big retail stores at the edge of town—aren't creating the kind of full-time jobs with good wages and benefits that are going to help locals continue to live here.

VIEW 8

New and traditional lifestyles conflict.

People are moving to our community because they like the lifestyle it offers. But many of these newcomers are discovering that they don't like some of the traditional aspects of life here. For example, some people who move into homes near working farms complain to local authorities about the smell of manure or dairy cows, noisy farm equipment running at night, or the use of pesticides. Long-time residents fear their way of life is being threatened as these sorts of situations create growing friction among neighbors.

VIEW 9

Public services are strained.

As more and more people move to our community, local government is having a hard time keeping up with all the demand for public services. Schools are overcrowded and underfunded. The police and fire departments are short on staff and can't always provide the best protection. And it's not just the growing areas that feel the pinch. The whole community suffers as funds for building and maintaining roads across town are stretched thin, and community sewage treatment systems and water supplies are strained.

PART 3 Wrapping up *(30 minutes)*

- What did you learn from this meeting? What new insights did you get from listening to others?
- What are one or two things you would most like to change about this community? What would you like to keep the same?

PREPARE FOR SESSION 2

During the next session, you'll explore why your community is experiencing the changes you talked about in today's discussion. Between now and the next session:

- Pay attention to the different perspectives in your community about growth issues:

  What do your family members, friends, and neighbors think about how the community is changing?

  What's being covered in the media?

- Take a closer look at the growth and development that is happening in your community:

  What kinds of growth and development do you see happening?

  What do you particularly like? Especially dislike?

An optional exercise for further discussion and personal exploration

BEING MINDFUL OF OUR SURROUNDINGS

Many people learn best through experience. Here is one way for you to use your own experiences to bring new insights into your study circle.

Author Tony Hiss believes that the look and feel of our everyday surroundings affect each of us more than we realize. He says it's important to be aware of how our communities are growing and changing because those changes deeply affect each of us. We may feel these changes in our health and happiness, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, how we interact with other people, and how we participate in community life.

Paying attention to our own experiences as we move through our communities each day is a first step in understanding how we react to our surroundings. This understanding can help us change our communities in ways that work for all of us.

AN EXERCISE FOR PAYING ATTENTION TO OUR DAILY EXPERIENCES

Think about one of your favorite places within walking or driving distance from where you live or work. Better yet, go there. Pay attention to what you experience there.

How do you get in touch with what you're experiencing? That's easy! Tony Hiss points out that (even though we don't usually pay attention to it) all of our minds are wired up with special circuits that deeply drink in all the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensations flowing into us at all times—a process he calls 'simultaneous perception.' We use this information to stay in touch, at very deep levels, with other human beings and the rest of creation. And we can deliberately get in touch with this process any time we have the time to relax and take in our surroundings without hurry. As you relax, just try to give equal attention to what your eyes are seeing, your ears hearing, your nose sniffing, and your skin feeling. At that moment, ask yourself:

Questions about your experience

- How do I feel being here?
- What is this place like? Do I notice specific sights, sounds, or smells?
- What else—other than what immediately draws my attention—am I aware of?
- Do I tend to move quickly or slowly through this place? How does my experience change as I walk or drive through it?

Questions about how your experience has changed over time

- Is my experience here different during the daytime, at night, on a weekday, a weekend, a holiday?
- Is my experience different than it used to be? How?
- Do I come here less often than I used to? More often? Why?
- Is anything likely to happen to this place that will change what I can experience here?

You may want to do this exercise several times during the weeks that your study circle meets. You can also use the questions to help you be more aware of everyday experiences. You'll find that you have new ideas and insights to share in your discussions.

Adapted with permission from Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place: A new way of looking at and dealing with our radically changing cities and countryside.* New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

SESSION 2

Why Is Our Community Experiencing These Changes?

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Break the session into three parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Post the notes from Session 1 where everyone can see them. If you're short on space, at least put up the notes from Part 3 of the discussion. This was where people shared their new insights about growth and their hopes for the community's future.
- Remember to take notes so you can refer to them in later sessions.

TO START PART 2—

- Ask a few members of your study circle to volunteer to read each view out loud.

  OR
- Ask members to read the views to themselves.
- After reading the views, ask some of the "Questions to think about" listed below.

As communities grow in different ways, people often disagree about why these changes are happening. Discussing that question is an important step in creating a shared understanding of the problems and opportunities of growth. That shared understanding provides the groundwork for effective solutions that enjoy broad support and commitment.

PART 1 Reflecting on what we're learning *(30 minutes)*

- Since our last meeting, did you have a chance to talk to family members, friends, or neighbors to find out how they feel about the changes the community is going through? What concerns, if any, do they have about the way growth and development are taking place?
- Did you have a chance to look around the community? What did you see? What did you like most about what you saw? What did you like least?

PART 2 Why are these changes happening? *(60 minutes)*

Each of the following views offers a different answer to the question, "Why is our community experiencing this kind of growth?" Each is written in the voice of a person who holds that perspective. Use these views as a starting point for your discussion and for developing your own thoughts.

VIEWS

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE VIEWS

- *Which view is closest to your own? Why? What experiences and beliefs have helped form your views?*
- *Think about a view you don't agree with. What might lead someone else to agree with that view?*
- *What points of view would you like to add?*

VIEW 1

More Americans can choose where and how they live.

It's only natural for people to choose to live and work in places that provide more elbow room. More people are moving to outer suburbs, small towns, and rural areas because new technologies like fax machines, computers, and the Internet make it possible to work away from central offices. Malls and large one-stop shopping centers make it cheaper and more convenient for people with busy schedules to obtain goods and services. If people no longer feel the need to go downtown to work and shop, who's to say that's a bad thing? These patterns of development may look and feel unfamiliar, but they're not necessarily bad. They're just different.

VIEW 2

Efforts to manage growth make things worse.

Our community's development is shaped in large part by the rules that local government sets. Local planning efforts have not kept up with (much less anticipated and creatively dealt with) the kinds of growth that have come our way. In fact, they usually cost more than projected and provide fewer benefits. On top of that, they often make the situation worse than it was before. Attempts to manage growth are more likely to cost taxpayers a lot of money than they are to solve congestion, pollution, and other problems. A big part of the trouble is that the average citizen has been pushed out of local planning. The process tends to be controlled by narrow interests that don't have the whole community in mind.

VIEW 3

Our daily personal choices create problems.

Each one of us makes personal choices that create the patterns of development our community is experiencing. We abandon our towns and cities for homes in the suburbs, making a self-fulfilling prophecy of our feelings that central cities are dangerous, poor, and badly managed. We drive miles to save pennies on toothpaste or deodorant at the super-discount drug store, instead of taking a few minutes to walk to the corner store. We insist on using our cars, even when public transportation is readily available. And we vote against local property taxes that are needed to help our schools and other public services keep up with the demands created by new growth.

VIEW 4

We don't consider the environment.

Too many communities are willing to allow growth that is harmful to the environment. In debates about specific development proposals, environmental concerns often seem less urgent and less important than economic concerns. And it's easy for communities to say that this little bit of water pollution or this little piece of wildlife habitat doesn't matter much. But they all add up. The bottom line is that we are not willing to restrict growth in the short term, even to assure the long-term health of the environment and the well-being of future generations.

VIEW 5

Government policies promote particular types of growth.

Public policies are biased toward particular types of growth. These deeply rooted biases help create problems such as sprawl, traffic congestion, and a mismatch between where workers can afford to live and where they can find jobs. For example:

- ✔ Too many state and federal dollars go to building new roads instead of investing in public transportation. These roads encourage people to spend more time in their cars and to develop areas farther and farther out of town.
- ✔ Taxes, service charges, and environmental regulations can make it difficult to renovate buildings or old industrial sites in already-developed areas. Often, businesses find it easier to build on undeveloped land.
- ✔ Local government zoning codes can make it difficult for working class people to find affordable housing near the many new jobs being created in the booming suburbs. Examples of these codes include requirements that homes be a certain size or have two-car garages.

PART 3 Identifying priority issues

(30 minutes)

- ♦ When you think back on this discussion and on Session 1, what seem to be the most important issues for the community to address? Which aspects of growth concern us most?
- ♦ If your list could have only one or two issues on it, which ones would you pick? Why?

PREPARE FOR SESSION 3

During the next session, you'll start talking about how your community can make progress on its most important growth issues. Between now and the next session, pay attention to who's doing what to address the challenges of growth:

- ♦ ***What's in the news?***
- ♦ ***What's already happening in your community?***
- ♦ ***How are people talking about new approaches or different policies?***
- ♦ ***What are other towns and cities doing?***

SESSION 3

What Are Our Options For Addressing Growth Issues?

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Break the session into three parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Post the notes from the earlier sessions where everyone can see them. If you're short on space, at least put up the notes from Part 3 of Session 2, where participants identified the most important growth issues facing their community.
- Remember to take notes so you can refer to them in later sessions.

TO START PART 2—

- Ask a few members of your study circle to volunteer to read each approach out loud.

OR

- Ask members to read the approaches to themselves.
- To make sure that all the approaches are considered, ask the "Questions to think about" listed below, after reading the approaches.
- To explore one approach in more depth, use the questions that accompany each one.

Communities across the country are addressing growth issues in many ways. This session helps you explore some general approaches your community might take.

PART 1 Our community's future

(10 minutes)

In this part, you will focus on this question:

What are one or two qualities that you most want this community to have?

Qualities may be characteristics your community already has, or they may be qualities that would be new to the community or that could be strengthened.

Your facilitator may lead the group in a brainstorm to get a lot of ideas out. In a brainstorm, there are no right or wrong answers. People can ask questions to help clarify someone's idea, but criticizing or contradicting is not allowed. Each person has a chance to offer one or two qualities. One person writes all the ideas where everyone can see them.

PART 2 Options for our community

(90 minutes)

Beginning on page 11, you will find examples of approaches that other communities and governments are using to address growth issues. Please keep in mind that they reflect different points of view about the causes and effects of growth, and different ideas about the best way to address growth issues. These approaches also can suggest new ideas for your community.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE APPROACHES

- *Which approaches appeal to us and why? What concerns or doubts do we have about them?*
- *Are nearby communities using innovative approaches that seem appealing?*
- *What approach seems likely to take our community in the direction we want to go?*

To explore one approach in more depth, use the questions that accompany each one.

PART 3 Wrapping up *(20 minutes)*

Many study circles invite one or more public officials to join them for Session 4. These questions will help you prepare for the next session:

- What are the most important things to talk about with public officials?
- What are our hopes and concerns for the community when it comes to growth?
- Which strategies seem promising to address our concerns? Why?

APPROACH 1

Use incentives and regulations to guide growth

New development can strain public services like roads and schools, and threaten farmland, open space and other things that people value. Citizens often turn to government to protect the good of the whole community when they see that happening. Some local government leaders are using creative ways to direct new development to areas that can handle its demands. Moreover, many state and federal agencies are using incentives and regulations to help guide growth at the local level.

EXAMPLES

- ***Channeling government funds to areas targeted for growth.*** The State of Maryland has a "Smart Growth" law. It helps communities focus development in existing town centers and other "Smart Growth Areas." State funds will be largely restricted to these areas. That includes money for roads and highways, business and economic development, school construction and renovation, and housing.
- ***Focusing development on old industrial sites and other unused urban land.*** The city of Chicago encourages development on "brownfields"—land that has been contaminated by past activity such as dry cleaning or manufacturing. The city buys abandoned land, pays for the cleanup, and sells the land at low prices to interested developers. New tax revenues from developing the land pay for the investment in cleanup. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and many states also have programs to support this kind of redevelopment.
- ***Charging higher impact fees for development that takes place outside the city center.*** The city of Lancaster, California, charges new developments a fee that helps cover the cost of city services such as law enforcement and street cleaning. The fee increases with the distance from the city center.
- ***Restricting new urban development to a definable area.*** Portland, Oregon, has one of the best known examples of an "urban growth boundary," which was put into place 20 years ago. Inside the boundary, new development is allowed. Outside the boundary, the land is zoned for farms and forests.

QUESTIONS

1. Do enough people agree on what our community should look like for this kind of approach to work? Where would we want to see development directed?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages to relying on government to direct growth?
3. What effects might this approach have on you, personally? On the ability of people who own land to make their own decisions about how the land should be used? On our community's ability to grow?
4. Many proposals for directing growth say we should increase density in certain areas while keeping it down in others. What might this look like in our community? Examples include:
   - Building townhomes in a neighborhood of single-family homes
   - Allowing people to rent out apartments in their basements or above garages
   - Building high-rise apartment buildings
   - Designing a development with half-acre rather than three-acre lots

APPROACH 2

Take charge of our economic future

People who live in growing communities often feel out of control, as if nothing they do will make any difference. But many communities are being innovative about drawing on their own resources to protect what's important to them. These locally oriented and controlled approaches expand the community's control over its own development and economic decisions. Often individuals, community groups, and businesses take the lead—but government also can be involved.

EXAMPLES

- ***Creating a community land trust to keep housing affordable.*** In Burlington, Vermont, a nonprofit trust holds land for the benefit of the community. It helps arrange financing so low- and moderate-income families can buy or rent the housing that sits on its land. In this way, the trust enables owners or tenants to rent or buy homes without worrying about rising land prices. It also works with commercial land and buildings.
- ***Building the "home grown" economy.*** In the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, an education organization called the Penn Center is working with islanders to strengthen the local economy and stave off the pressures of development. A folk-art center teaches local arts like quilting and sea-grass basket weaving and helps artisans sell their work. Other projects include a facility to process locally grown produce and a community development corporation.
- ***Investing resources back into the community.*** Community loan funds, for example, can create a long-term source of funding for housing rehabilitation, business start-up, and other projects. A $20,000 loan from a community loan fund enabled a community development corporation (CDC) in Dallas, Texas, to purchase 40 houses that were slated for demolition. Building on that purchase, the CDC has been able to buy, renovate, and lease 50 housing units to families earning less than $12,000 per year.

QUESTIONS

1. What goals would we work toward if we took this approach? Do enough people agree on what's good for our community to make this approach work? Do we have resources to build on?
2. Is this approach likely to assure our community's well-being in the face of the growth we're experiencing?
3. How would our community change if we used our own resources to make sure that community members have access to basics—things like secure and rewarding jobs, living wages, affordable housing, child care, and a healthy environment? Could we make a difference with this kind of approach?
4. What effects might this approach have on your own life? On your feelings about the community?

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Action Approaches From Other Places

APPROACH 3

Build regional cooperation

Growth seldom affects only one community at a time. In many metropolitan areas, the urban core often suffers while newer suburbs on the fringe grow and thrive. In other places, efforts to manage growth are overwhelmed by development outside city limits. Other communities find that their plans for growth conflict with the surrounding county's approach. When more than one community is involved, solo efforts to deal with growth issues are not usually successful. Instead, communities are forging alliances in broader regions or creating regional governing bodies. Other communities are working together on a less formal basis.

EXAMPLES

- ***Creating a coalition of business, civic, and government leaders.*** In the Cleveland, Ohio, area, public officials from the city and close-in suburbs have teamed up to create the "First Suburbs Consortium." The consortium is also supported by community, church, and business leaders. It is pushing for changes in state and federal policies that encourage suburban sprawl in the region and add to the problems of the declining urban center.
- ***Pooling tax resources.*** The city of Pittsburgh and other local governments in southwestern Pennsylvania joined together to create the Allegheny Regional Asset District. The district collects funds from a local sales tax and distributes the money to the 128 cities and towns in the region. The money is used for libraries, parks, sports facilities, and cultural organizations. It is also used to reduce property taxes and provide tax relief for senior citizens. Poorer communities receive more revenue from this tax pool than do wealthier communities.
- ***Working together on land-use planning.*** The Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council was formed by eleven communities bordering the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in Ohio. The council has established voluntary guidelines for development along the park boundary. Most of the towns have changed their zoning codes to reflect these guidelines, and landowners and developers usually go along with the council's recommendations.

QUESTIONS

1. Are the benefits and costs of growth the same for everyone in our area? If not, what differences do we see?
2. Do the communities in this area see themselves as being part of a larger region? Do we have any experiences with working together as a region?
3. Does looking at growth regionally make sense for our community? Why or why not?
4. Should communities (or parts of a community) that are doing well take responsibility for helping neighboring areas that are less fortunate? Why or why not?
5. How might working regionally affect our community? What changes might we see in our community's ability to make its own decisions about growth issues?

APPROACH 4

Generate citizen energy and vision

There's one sure thing about growth: it can cause divisions in a community. People often engage in "us versus them" arguments when controversial proposals come up. But once a particular controversy dies down, many people stop participating in community affairs. Getting more citizens to be involved—and to stay involved—is an important part of many communities' efforts to prevent flare-ups and move forward together on growth issues. The change is usually started by citizens who share a concern about what's happening to the community. It often begins with an opportunity for community members to come together to talk about their concerns and hopes for the future.

EXAMPLES

- ***Getting people talking about the future.*** In Red Lodge, Montana, several citizens convened a community workshop. During the two-day meeting, residents talked about the kind of community they want Red Lodge to be. They identified priorities for action and formed citizen working groups to work on the ideas that came out of the workshop.
- ***Mobilizing existing groups.*** The Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, church congregations, or senior citizen groups can be strong voices for your community's quality of life. In Ashland, Wisconsin, realtors distribute information packets to purchasers of waterfront property. The packets help new owners reduce their impacts on the loons that breed and nest in the area's lakes and islands.
- ***Making an inventory of local resources and trends.*** A resort was developed at the mineral springs for which the town of Hot Springs, North Carolina, was named. The town council appointed a committee to study the town's options for dealing with the growth that was expected to follow. The committee began its work by surveying residents and holding public forums to identify the town's most important scenic, historic, and cultural resources.

QUESTIONS

1. How would taking this approach help us address our community's specific concerns about growth? Is it likely to work quickly enough to get ahead of—or even keep up with—the pace of growth and its effects on our community?
2. Will we be able to translate the energy and vision of citizens into meaningful changes?
3. Do we think people will participate? How would each of us, personally, be willing to participate in a citizen-driven effort? What effect might other responsibilities or desires have—for example our families, jobs, recreation, schooling, and so on?
4. How would our lives be different if our community took this approach? Would we have responsibilities that we don't have now?
5. What effect would taking this approach have on the ability of local government to do its job?

APPROACH 5

Reduce our dependence on government to manage growth

Local and regional governments often take the lead in planning for and controlling growth. But some communities aren't willing to give government more authority to tell people how and where to live. Other communities are not convinced that the usual approaches are the most effective or efficient ways to deal with growth problems. Instead, they are achieving community goals by using the market, and by encouraging individuals and businesses to take the initiative.

EXAMPLES

- ***Making public transit a private business.*** Many cities have created public transportation systems that are expensive and under-used. Some cities are saving money and improving service by deregulating mass transit. That way, private operators can compete with the local public transit agency. For example, in the San Gabriel Valley of California, bus service is competitively contracted out. Since this began, more people are riding the buses and the local government is saving money.
- ***Allowing neighborhoods to control land use.*** Most U.S. cities have zoning codes that restrict certain types of buildings to specific areas. Houston, Texas, is an exception. There, property owners make the decisions that affect the value of the land in each neighborhood. Usually the decisions are made by community or homeowners associations, or by subdivision developers. They often use deed restrictions to control what can or cannot be done on a property. These restrictions are recorded on the property deed and passed on from owner to owner.
- ***Building public schools with private funds.*** In Castro Valley, California, the developer of a large subdivision built an elementary school and donated it to the local school district. In return, the usual $1,500 charge for school fees was waived on each of the 1,700 units in the subdivision. The developer saved money and at the same time, offered the state a lesson in how to reduce school construction costs and time. The school building was completed in just six months, and it cost 35 percent less than it would have if the state had built it.

QUESTIONS

1. How is government action affecting the way our community is growing? Is it contributing to the problems we're experiencing? Is it helping solve or avoid problems?
2. Does it make sense to rely on government to manage growth? Why or why not?
3. What benefits might come from relying more on individual initiative, responsibility, and creativity to shape our community's development? What might the downsides be?
4. Who is likely to benefit from relying less on government to guide growth decisions?
5. What affect would this approach have on our community's ability to plan for its future?

APPROACH 6

Build momentum with a single issue

Communities face a big challenge just to start work on growth issues. The issues often seem too complex to understand or too overwhelming to address. One way to begin is to focus on a single issue that grabs the public's attention and is ripe for generating action. If the community makes progress on that issue, people become aware of other growth-related issues and help create energy for community action.

EXAMPLES

- ***Tackling traffic congestion.*** One way to ease traffic headaches is to make it easier for people to live near where they work and do their errands. In the Seattle area, Key Bank offered employees the opportunity to take jobs at branches closer to where they live. This project reduced commute length and made it easier for people to use other ways of getting to work. Other communities are changing zoning codes so that offices, shops, and homes can be mixed together.
- ***Challenging specific proposals.*** Wal-Mart had to adapt its plans for its first store in Vermont. The company bowed to community pressure against large box stores on the outskirts of Bennington. Wal-Mart set up shop in a renovated department store downtown.
- ***Bringing new life to town centers.*** Restoring a town's historic character can tempt businesses and residents to reconsider their plans to move to the suburbs. In Hot Springs, Arkansas, the city worked with Hot Springs National Park to renovate a six-block downtown area next to the park's bathhouses. Hot Springs created historic preservation guidelines for the district and raised $500,000 through a temporary sales tax to help fund the renovations. Both the National Park Service and the state of Arkansas contributed matching funds.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there a starting point, such as a specific issue, that makes sense for our community? Why? (In some communities, focusing on water quality or supply makes sense. In others, the starting point might be affordable housing, schools, dying downtowns, or preserving open space.)
2. Do most people agree on the importance of any one issue? Is there enough agreement to spark and sustain action?
3. How would taking on this issue help us address the larger issues of growth in our community?
4. Is our community likely to get wrapped up in endless debates about this one issue that will distract us from the larger issues that growth raises?

SESSION 4

Meeting With Public Officials

FACILITATOR TIPS

- This session should have the same reasonable, respectful tone as the other sessions. You are simply expanding the study circle discussion to include public officials.
- For tips on structuring the dialogue, see page 34.
- Because of the unique dynamics of this session, you may need to work extra hard to keep the discussion on track. Make sure that everyone follows the ground rules.
- Break this session into three parts. Use the questions and suggested time limits noted for each part to guide your discussion.
- Remember to take notes so you can refer to them in Session 5.

In this session, you will meet with public officials. You may choose to meet with local or state elected officials, or with your congressional representative or senator. Or you may decide to invite staff from local, state, or federal government departments. If your study circle is part of a community-wide program, you will want to include participants from other study circles, too.

Working on issues related to growth requires cooperation from throughout the community and from different levels of government. You can build this cooperation by listening to how public officials and other community members see the issues and what needs to be done.

GROUND RULES

We agree to:

- Have a give-and-take discussion. We do not lecture or "sell" our point of view.
- Let everyone look at all sides of an issue. No one has to have an instant answer.
- Keep the discussion focused on the issue.
- Allow the news media to attend the meeting only if we all agree. Comments during the meeting are "off the record" and not to be used in the media.

PART 1 Preparing to meet with public officials *(30 minutes)*

Your study circle should take time to prepare for the meeting with public officials. It is especially important to do so if your study circle is part of a larger community-wide program. Spend some time reflecting on earlier discussions. Everyone needs to know what to expect and be able to express the views of the whole community.

- The ground rules listed above right address some of the problems that come up when citizens and public officials meet together. Add them to the ground rules you have been using in earlier sessions. Make changes to the list as you see fit.
- Review what you have already discussed in your study circle by using the focus questions on page 18. They will guide your meeting.

PART 2 Talking with public officials

(60–75 minutes)

When the public officials join your meeting, review the ground rules again and see if anyone, including the public officials, wants to add anything to the list. Then, to get the discussion going, two or three people should share what they have learned from the study circles so far. Keep these comments brief and related to the focus questions. This will help keep people relaxed and on track.

Next, open up the discussion so everyone can participate by sharing their own ideas and asking each other questions. Use the focus questions to guide the talk.

PART 3 Wrapping up *(15–30 minutes)*

To close the meeting, spend some time reflecting on what you have learned from each other during the discussion. Make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak.

PREPARE FOR SESSION 5

By the end of this session, you may have a clearer sense of the possibilities and challenges your community has in addressing issues related to growth. Between now and the next meeting, you might want to:

- ***Read "What Can One Person Do?" and "What Can Our Community Do?" in Session 5, pages 20–22. They provide ideas for action.***
- ***Think about what you can do on your own—and what you can do with others—to move toward the kind of future you want for your community.***

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are our hopes and concerns for the community when it comes to growth?
2. What are the most promising ideas for change? Why?
3. What questions or doubts do we have about these ideas?
4. How can government help our community realize our hopes and address our concerns about growth?
5. What questions do we have for our public officials? Why are these questions important?

SESSION 5

Shaping The Future: What Can We Do In Our Community?

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Break this session into four parts. Use the questions and suggested time limits noted for each part to guide your discussion. (Be sure to leave time for the questions in Part 4. It is important for people to talk about what the study circle has meant to them.)
- Post the notes from earlier sessions where everyone can see them. If you're short on space, at least put up the notes from Part 3 of Session 4. This was the discussion about what participants learned during the conversation with public officials.
- The group is likely to come up with a variety of actions on different levels. Participants should feel free to choose their own paths, so be sure to emphasize that taking action is voluntary.
- Review "Organizing for Action," on page 31, for more tips on how to make the most of participants' ideas for action.

To start Part 2—

- Divide participants into groups of three or four. Ask each group to look over the action ideas and examples and use them to spark their own thinking. (See "Action Ideas," page 20.) Each group should spend 15 minutes or so identifying two or three action ideas they would like to pursue.

OR

- Ask participants to take a few minutes to look over the action ideas and examples.
- After reading the action ideas, ask some of the questions provided to start the discussion.

Towns and cities that are grappling with growth are finding that everyone needs to be part of the solution to community problems. Broad public involvement is an important part of making the community a genuinely good place to live.

You have already engaged in a form of action by coming together to learn from each other and share ideas. Finding ways to keep talking and include more people from the community is a very good next step. Study circles often lead to action groups in which some people decide to put their ideas from the study circles into action.

This session will help you think about actions that address the issues you have discussed in earlier study circle sessions.

PART 1 Reflecting on our meeting with officials *(15 minutes)*

- What did we learn from our conversation with officeholders?
- What new questions or concerns came up? What new opportunities do we see?

PART 2 Thinking together about how we can make a difference *(45 minutes)*

Think about actions you can take individually, and actions that need the broader community involved. Look over the action ideas, which begin on page 20, to spark your thinking.

1. Think back to the issues and concerns discussed in our study circle. What would you most like to see people in our community work on? Why?
2. What can you, personally, do to make a difference? Why is this action important to you?
3. What actions might our community take? What ideas from other communities seem promising? Why do you think these actions will help make our community a better place to live?
4. What efforts are already going on in our community to address these issues? What are individuals, businesses, community organizations, government, and other groups doing?

PART 3 Setting priorities for action

(45 minutes)

Now, decide how to begin organizing for action, and how to prepare for an action forum.

1. What two or three ideas seem most practical and useful?
2. How can we turn these ideas into reality? What kinds of information, support, or help do we need in order to take these steps?
3. What resources are already in place that could help us move ahead? Where is our community already strong?
4. Who could be involved? How can we reach them? What resources can we tap outside the community?
5. What is our next step?
6. Will we be meeting with other study circles to share ideas for action? If so, what ideas do we want to present?

PART 4 Reflecting on our study circle

(15 minutes)

- What new insights have you gained by participating in this study circle? What has made the biggest impact on how you think about growth? on your actions in the community?
- What did you find most valuable about the study circle?
- What worked well in your discussions? What didn't work very well? What changes would you suggest for future study circles?

ACTION IDEAS

These ideas reflect different views about growth issues. Use them as a resource to jump-start your own thinking. For example, ask yourself which action steps best fit your views about growth and its effect on your community.

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

Sometimes it seems that one person can't do much to make a difference in the community. But everything that happens is built on individual actions, and each person's actions do matter! These individual actions can help your community grow into a place you are proud to call home.

- ***Be active in neighborhood and community groups.*** These grassroots organizations can help your community take charge of its future and make a big difference in people's lives.
- ***When you vote, think about what you want your community to look like over the long term.*** Consider your community's future when you decide how you feel about issues like bonds for purchasing open space, zoning changes, development impact fees, privatizing bus service, or regional government cooperation. Learn what these proposals might mean for your community.
- ***Express your thoughts.*** Write letters to the editor, communicate with your public officials, talk about growth issues with neighbors, friends, family, and co-workers. Keep the dialogue and the learning going. Continue your study circle.
- ***Be an involved citizen.*** Participate in public meetings on growth and related issues. Volunteer for citizen task forces. Join in community visioning efforts and follow-up actions.
- ***Pay attention to how you travel around your community.*** Think about how the forms of transportation you use affect your community, and your own feelings about where you live and how you spend your time. If you want to make a

change, you might look into other forms of transportation, flexible working arrangements that cut down on the need to commute, and other ways of reducing your need to travel around.

- ***Support public officials when they take a constructive approach to resolving growth issues.*** Be a part of a constituency that supports moving toward your community's highest aspirations.
- ***Consider the future of the community when you make business decisions.*** Think about the effects of the decisions that you make about your own property and investments. Where will you locate your business? Can you hire and purchase locally? Should—or how should—you develop a piece of land? Where will you live in relationship to where you work? Will you renovate an historic building?

WHAT CAN OUR COMMUNITY DO?

The approaches outlined in Session 3 offer examples of what communities across the country are doing to make growth work for them. The following ideas might spark new ideas about the kinds of actions your community could take.

- ***Decide what's important to protect and promote.*** Some communities in Iowa, for example, use "corn suitability" ratings to guide zoning and planning decisions so the best farmland is protected. In Los Angeles, the city and the L.A. Metropolitan Transit Authority are working together to cut down on sprawl and traffic congestion by encouraging high density development around transit stations.
- ***Preserve open space.*** Use conservation easements to provide a financial incentive for owners not to develop their land. Pass bond issues or a local sales tax for purchasing open space and park land. Some state governments and federal agencies make money available to local governments and private land trusts to protect farm and forest land, natural areas, and other open space. In the Chicago area, local and state governments and nongovernmental organizations are working together to create a regionwide network of linked open spaces.
- ***Change zoning codes to reflect your community's goals.*** For example, you might decide to remove zoning codes that require new developments to provide off-street parking. This change could cut the cost of new housing developments, let the market decide how much parking space to provide and how to pay for it, and help make your community friendlier for pedestrians and alternative transportation. In Portland, Oregon, a recent permit for a downtown low-income housing development waived the requirement to provide off-street parking. That waiver cut about $10,000 from the construction cost of each apartment.
- ***Link housing with other community issues.*** Residents of Eastside Community in Indianapolis, Indiana, organized a community development corporation to obtain private funding for a community housing project. The group repaired old homes and sold them for a profit. This revenue was used to make investments in small, locally owned businesses and to build an industrial park. The first loan made by the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund in Concord enabled a group of 13 families to buy the mobile home park where they lived. This purchase kept the land from being developed into high-priced condominiums.
- ***Charge road-use fees to reduce traffic on congested highways.*** Making the fee highest during rush hour and very low or nothing at night encourages people to find other ways to get where they're going, especially during the busiest times. This "congestion pricing" is being used by a private road company in Orange County, California. The company built a two-lane highway paralleling a crowded freeway. People using the highway must buy radio transponders that send out signals picked up at toll areas along

the road. The toll is either charged to the user's credit card or deducted from a prepaid amount. Highway users are willing to pay for the convenience and speed of driving on this less-crowded road.

- ***Organize to challenge a specific proposal.*** When local officials approved plans for a large shopping mall and office complex next to Manassas National Battlefield Park in Virginia, community members created a broad-based coalition of Civil War buffs, veterans groups, landowners, and conservationists from the area. This local group reached out across the country with their campaign, "Save the Battlefield." In less than a year, Congress added the land to the park.
- ***Strengthen neighborhoods***. Especially in urban areas, strong neighborhoods are the building blocks of a healthy community. Community development corporations in Chicago have taken the lead in renovating housing in urban neighborhoods, developing industrial and commercial real estate, and marketing the neighborhoods' advantages. One neighborhood organization turned an old auto parts warehouse into a small business incubator where new businesses share technical support and office equipment. Once businesses have outgrown their need for the incubator, they are encouraged to continue to do business in the neighborhood.
- ***Get neighbors talking.*** A group of six ranching families near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, got together to talk about how to protect their ranches from encroaching development. They ended up putting conservation easements on 2,800 acres of land.
- ***Help community members stay ahead of the rising cost of living.*** Support efforts to reduce the taxes and regulations that may make it difficult for companies to invest profitably in your community. For example, the city government of Indianapolis, Indiana, created a Regulatory Study Commission to eliminate outdated and counterproductive rules that were stifling economic development. Another approach is to start a local currency system, such as those begun by Madison, Wisconsin, Ithaca, New York, and Bozeman, Montana. Local currency allows people to trade skills, services, and products for currency that allows them to buy what they want from other community members and many local merchants.
- ***Reach beyond the traditional "movers and shakers" to develop a broad base of energy and support.*** In Maryville, Tennessee, the nonprofit Foothills Land Conservancy raised $1.3 million to buy a large tract of land at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Media appeals and a color brochure helped convince more than 3,300 people—including 100 school and youth groups—to donate money for protecting this land from development.
- ***Create ways for officials from different levels of government to exchange information and build better working relationships.*** Public officials from Mohave County, Arizona, began convening forums that bring together officials from local governments, state and federal agencies, and Indian tribes. The forums have resulted in cooperative agreements among governments and the passage of a new state law giving the county more authority to manage growth.
- ***Strengthen the local economy to buffer the effects of growth.*** In Durham, North Carolina, the Center for Community Self-Help started a credit union and loan fund with $77 raised by a bake sale. Among other services, the center and its related financial institutions (which have grown tremendously since the bake sale days) provide assistance and loans for starting worker-owned businesses.

GLOSSARY

Affordable housing
Homes or apartments that most people living in an area can afford to purchase or rent. Governments often define it as housing that someone can afford who makes a certain percentage of the area's median income—often around 70 percent. In many communities, the issue of affordable housing centers on three questions: Do employees of local businesses have convenient access to housing they can afford? Can long-standing local residents like senior citizens remain in their communities? Will housing remain affordable over the long term?

Alternative transportation
Methods of travel other than car. These methods include public transit such as rail, bus, and subway, and individual modes such as bicycling and walking. Sometimes commuter van services and carpooling are considered alternative transportation because they offer an alternative to single-passenger commuting.

Bond financing
Long-term financing used by local governments. Bonds are sold to investors and must be paid back, with interest, usually over a period of ten or twenty years. They can be used to finance many community projects such as schools, open space preservation, libraries, and fire stations.

Brownfields
Unused, often abandoned, properties that have been contaminated by previous use. Many brownfield sites can be restored to levels acceptable for commercial or industrial use. They are also attractive to developers because brownfields are usually served by roads, water, and sewer. However, liability concerns often keep developers and businesses from using this land.

Community development corporations (CDC)
Community-based organizations that work on issues ranging from revitalizing neighborhoods and commercial areas to cultural activities and job training. They can be controlled by the community's residents, often through membership, but sometimes through a confederation of other community organizations that band together to create the CDC.

Community land trust
Nonprofit corporation created to hold land for the benefit of a community. Community land trusts are democratically structured and anyone in the community can be a member. Other types of land trusts may hold land for a specific reason, such as conservation or keeping the land in agricultural production. These types of trusts do not need to be governed by the community in which they hold land.

Community loan fund
Nonprofit corporation, or a program of a nonprofit, that makes loans for projects within a community. Community loan funds often provide loans and technical assistance to groups and projects that cannot get funding through more traditional sources. They can serve as intermediaries between community investors and borrowers. Community loan funds get money by borrowing from individuals and institutions such as banks or foundations.

Conservation easement
Agreement between a landowner and government agency or nonprofit organization (such as a land trust). The agreement limits the landowner's ability to develop land, often in exchange for cash and/or reduced property taxes. Conservation easements work because the legal right to use land in certain ways can be separated from physical ownership of the land. For example, a conservation easement on a ranch might allow the owner to continue grazing cattle on the land, but prohibit selling land for housing developments. Easements can have effect for a limited time or in perpetuity.

Density
Proportion of people or residences to a given amount of space, such as the number of residences per acre. Maximum or minimum density of development is often specified in zoning codes. Some local governments link allowable densities to other important public benefits like affordable housing or the protection of open space. For example, in return for building low- or moderate-income housing or preserving open space within the development, a developer might be given a "density bonus." This bonus allows the developer to build more housing units per acre than typically allowed under zoning provisions.

Development fees
Fees that local governments charge for new developments. They support public services (fire and police protection or water and sewage treatment) or construction of new facilities (schools, roads, or parks). These fees can be a one-time charge collected from developers, or a longer-term fee collected from residents of a new development.

Edge city
Urban center that has grown up at the edge of an established city. Author Joel Garreau coined this phrase, which he used as the title of his 1991 book about this new urban form. He notes that "they contain all the functions a city ever has, albeit in a spread-out form that few have come to recognize for what it is." According to Garreau, edge cities differ from old-fashioned suburbs in that they have

plenty of office and retail space and "more jobs than bedrooms." They are perceived as being one place, although the boundaries may be fuzzy; and they have developed their "city" characteristics within the last thirty years.

Inner suburbs
Communities adjacent to large cities, often formed in the years after World War II when middle-class families moved out from the city to new homes in new suburbs. Over time, the economies of many inner suburbs have declined and their middle-class residents have moved to newer communities farther away from the city center.

Land trust
See *community land trust.*

Land-use planning
Local government activity that lays out policies and standards governing the future physical development of a city or county. The general plan (or town plan) is an overall blueprint for development based on the community's goals. Often the general plan of the city or county is supplemented by more specific community or neighborhood plans. Plans are updated periodically. (See *zoning.*)

Local (or community) currency
Legal currency, issued by the people of a community to increase the local money supply and improve their ability to provide for their own needs with local resources. Local currencies are spent within the community among individuals and businesses who agree to accept them. They are often denominated in hours-of-labor (and are sometimes called "hours") but can also be linked to the federal currency (for example, an "hour" might be worth $10).

Metropolitan area
City and its surrounding area. Metropolitan areas are defined in different ways, such as by the extent of city services such as water and sewer or a shared public transit system. The U.S. Census Bureau defines metropolitan areas in terms of certain population levels. No matter what the definition, the cities, suburbs, and other communities in metropolitan areas have strong economic ties and other interests in common.

Open space
Land largely free of residential and industrial development. This land may have a variety of values for people and communities, including wildlife habitat, recreation access, and esthetic enjoyment. Farm lands and community parks are generally considered to be open space.

Regionalism
View that a city and its surrounding area are a single economic unit, despite the many political jurisdictions that divide the region. Regional connections include environmental and cultural links, roads and highways, shared public services, and other ties. Regionalists say that collaboration among the city, suburbs, surrounding rural areas, and towns will improve the well-being of the entire area. (See *metropolitan area.*)

Sprawl
Low-density development at the edges of cities and towns that spreads out into previously undeveloped land. Sprawl often consists of "strips" of commercial development along major roadways and highway interchanges, and spread-out residential developments, usually of detached single family homes. In rural areas, residential sprawl may have little relation to a town center. Some people believe that "sprawl" unfairly labels a growth pattern that Americans have been choosing for decades.

Subdivision
Large piece of land that is divided into smaller lots on which houses are built. Homes in subdivisions are often similar in style and cost. They are serviced by roads, utilities, and other public services that were planned for and provided by the original developer. In most states and counties, subdivisions over a certain size must follow particular government regulations.

Suburb
Residential area located outside of a city or town. Some suburbs have their own business districts with shopping and offices.

Sustainable development
Development that satisfies current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and aspirations. Advocates of sustainability are concerned with social equity, and economic and environmental health.

Tax credits (or breaks)
Reduced tax burden that promotes certain types of development or investment. These tax reductions may be written into tax codes governing everything from local or state property taxes to federal income taxes.

Zoning
Local codes that govern the use and development of property. Zoning usually divides a community into "zones" that allow only certain types of development. Performance zoning is another approach. It relies on a case-by-case review of proposed developments using detailed "performance standards," which specify how developments should be designed and constructed. (See *land-use planning.*)

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

A study circle facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic being discussed, or even the most knowledgeable person in the group. But the facilitator should be the best prepared for the discussion. This means understanding the goals of the study circle, being familiar with the subject, thinking ahead of time about how the discussion might go, and preparing questions to aid the group in considering the subject. Solid preparation will enable you to give your full attention to group dynamics and to what individuals in the group are saying.

HELP PARTICIPANTS KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

Make sure participants know from the beginning that this is their study circle.
At the start, have an open discussion about the goals of the study circle and how it will work. Call people's attention to "Making the most of your study circle" on page 3. Use the "Ground rules for useful discussions," also on page 3, as a starting point for group members to agree on their own ground rules.

Be clear about your role as facilitator.
Your job is to help keep the discussion moving and on track. Be sure that everyone understands your role. (See "The facilitator's role," at right.)

Stick with the ground rules.
Post them at each session. Use them! If a problem develops, ask group members if they are sticking to the ground rules.

LEARN AS YOU GO

End each session by reflecting on the discussion.
Invite people to mention new ideas they gained in the discussion. Also, talk about how the session went and what the group—and you as facilitator—could do better next time. Some people feel uncomfortable saying their criticisms out loud. You may want to give people time to write down their thoughts about the process.

THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE

- **Stay neutral.** Use the power you have with the group well. Your role should never be to promote a particular point of view, but rather to further the discussion. By the end of the discussion, group members should not know your views.
- **Help participants understand and be understood.** Many people take part in study circles to gain a better personal grasp of an issue. Focus the discussion more on developing that understanding than on coming to agreement.
- **Be an active listener.** You will need to understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listen carefully. You will be more alert to potential conflicts, and you'll be setting a good example for participants.
- **Don't be the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of authority on the subject. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.
- **Keep the discussions on track.** Important issues are usually related to each other, so discussions often stray into other areas. Allow participants to explore connections and ideas, but try to keep the discussion related to the session's topic.

Begin each session with reflection.
Build each discussion on the progress the group has already made. Post the notes from previous sessions in the room, and begin by reflecting on the previous sessions. Also discuss new thoughts participants may have since the last meeting.

Keep track of questions, ideas for action, and other things that could sidetrack the discussion.
Study circle members often come up with questions and thoughts that don't fit into the current discussion. Keep a running list of the kinds of things that come up often. For example:

- Unanswered questions—List on a separate sheet of paper. At the end of the session, the group could decide who would be willing to find answers to the most important questions before the next session.

TIPS ABOUT TAKING NOTES

- **Team up to take notes.** Two facilitators, working as a team, can easily switch off responsibilities for leading the discussion and taking notes.
- **Ask participants to volunteer.** If you can't find another facilitator to team with, you can ask study circle members to volunteer as note taker. Make sure it's not the same person for every session, because taking notes takes the person out of the discussion. You could even switch note-takers partway through a session to give everyone a chance to take notes and to talk!
- **Focus on the main ideas.** Instead of trying to write every word, the note-taker should capture the main ideas. And notes may not be necessary for every part of the discussion. The facilitator and note-taker should decide the most important parts to record.
- **Make the notes easy to read.** Notes are most helpful if they are written so that everyone can see them as the discussion goes along. For example, use colorful markers on large sheets of newsprint. Write clearly. Post the filled sheets around the room.
- **Use the notes.** Otherwise, there's not much point to taking them.
  - Refer to them during a discussion to keep track of progress.
  - Post them at a later session to remind the group of key ideas from earlier sessions. Ask people if the notes reflect their discussion accurately and fairly.
  - Have someone type up the notes and hand them out at the next session.
  - Look at them between sessions to prepare yourself to facilitate the next session.

- Action ideas—Keep track of these and use them to spark people's thinking during Session 3 or Session 5, which focus on action.

Review the discussions yourself.
To prepare for each session, think about how you would summarize the discussions so far. Note the outstanding issues, areas of agreement, and key ideas that you want to bring into the next discussion.

Work with a note-taker.
Good notes can help the study circle keep track of its progress both during the discussion and from one session to the next. Ask someone to be the note-taker—don't do it yourself. (See "Tips about taking notes," above.)

USE THE VIEWS!

In the study circle materials, some sessions include viewpoints or approaches to action. These powerful tools help the study circle consider a range of ideas. They also help you encourage participants to think differently about the issue. It's important that you know how to use them.

Make sure everyone is familiar with the views.
Post a list of the view titles. Then ask for volunteers to read the descriptions out loud, or read to themselves. This step reminds everyone that a range of views exist.

Use the views to broaden participants' thinking.
The thoughts and ideas of study circle members should be the starting place and guiding force behind the discussion. Participants bring their own ideas about the issue and how to act on it. Use the views to encourage people to consider other perspectives. To push their understanding, ask members to make a good case for a view they disagree with.

Compare and contrast the views.
Rather than discussing each viewpoint separately, help participants see connections between the views and their own perspectives. Encourage people to compare and contrast their thinking with the views. Sometimes it makes sense to look in detail at one view for a bit, but be alert for ways of moving the discussion easily from one view to another.

Make sure all the views are considered.
Bring in unpopular views—or ones that participants simply haven't thought of—to help people test new ideas and understand other perspectives. Encourage people to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each view.

MANAGE THE DISCUSSION

Let participants respond to one another's comments and questions.
Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not with the facilitator. If questions or comments are directed at you, try to deflect them to another member of the group.

Remember, you should speak less than any other person in the group.

Allow for pauses and silences.
It's tempting to fill silences, especially after you've asked a question. Instead, silently count to ten after asking a question. The pause will give people time to think and reflect, or to build up courage to make a point.

Draw out quiet participants.
Don't put anyone on the spot, but watch for subtle opportunities to bring quiet people into the discussion naturally. This will be easier if you use time before and after your study circle to become acquainted with each member of the group. Learn participants' names and use them.

Don't let the group get hung up on "facts."
Disagreements about basic facts are common for controversial issues. If there is debate about a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on. Ask participants who disagree about a fact to research it for the next session.

Don't let the aggressive, talkative person or faction dominate.
If you allow people to interrupt or let one or two talkers take over, the more polite people will become angry and frustrated. At the first sign of trouble, you can head off problems by referring to the ground rules the group has set.

Use conflict productively.
Explore areas of disagreement. Encourage participants to say what they really think, even if it's unpopular. However, do not tolerate put-downs, name-calling, labeling, or personal attacks. Such behaviors can be forbidden by the group's ground rules.

Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.
Consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion. Ask group members to help you with this task. You don't have to wait until the end of a session to summarize. Do it when you sense that some participants are having a hard time keeping track of what's happening, or when a little breather or reflection time seems appropriate.

Don't worry about achieving consensus.
While it's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, consensus is not necessary. Even in the face of widely divergent views, you can still help participants find areas of common ground.

USING QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What else haven't we considered?" will encourage discussion rather than short, specific answers. Such questions are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.
- **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion simply to confirm old assumptions. Encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Help people think critically. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, even if you don't agree with them.
- **Use follow-up questions.** Encourage participants to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their comments. These follow-up questions can be addressed to individuals or to the group as a whole:
  - What makes you say that?
  - Why is that a problem?
  - Why is that important?
  - How does that make you feel?
  - What do you make of that?
  - What do you think is really going on here?

HAVE A GOOD TIME!

Even as you discuss serious and important issues, remember to have fun! A sense of humor helps smooth over rough spots and puts participants at ease.

ORGANIZING STUDY CIRCLE PROGRAMS

Each community must find its own way to build dialogue and citizen involvement. However, important precedents, principles, and lessons can provide guidance along the way.

This section provides a basic "toolbox" for organizers and facilitators of study circles. The advice summarizes what we have learned from hundreds of site visits, phone conversations, reports, news articles, and more. It includes:

- An overview of study circles
- Organizing study circles on growth
- Organizing for action
- Involving public officials in study circle programs

This information helps facilitators better understand how study circles work—and why. You need to have a clear sense of this so you understand your role better and are able to answer questions. Participants usually want to talk about what might happen after their study circle. Using the information in this session, you can help them explore their options for action, including using study circles with other community members.

For information on where community-wide study circles are happening or where study circle coalitions are forming, contact the **Study Circles Resource Center.** (See page 38.)

If you are organizing study circles, you'll also find this information helpful. For more detailed guidance on organizing study circle programs, Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) offers an excellent resource called *Planning Community-wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide.* (See page 38 for SCRC's address.)

An Overview Of Study Circles

Many types of benefits come from study circles. Through study circles, people can:

- educate themselves
- establish new relationships and new community networks
- recognize ways to change their own behavior
- cooperate with others to solve common problems
- help to create much larger political changes in their communities

Study circles have these benefits because they help citizens take responsibility for community issues. Study circle participants see connections between personal experiences and public policies, and gain a deeper understanding of their own and others' perspectives and concerns. They discover common ground and a greater desire and ability to work individually and collaboratively to solve problems.

Where can study circles take place?

Study circles can take place within organizations, such as schools, congregations, workplaces, or government agencies. Libraries, civic groups, and government task forces might sponsor them. At the most basic level, what you need to organize a study circle are participants, a place to meet, a facilitator, discussion materials, and the commitment to talk together about an issue of common concern. Many organizations can come up with these basic ingredients.

The study circle can be adapted to the needs and goals of many communities and organizations. Some organizations, for example, combine study circles with their regular monthly meetings. Groups of co-workers might meet over lunch once a week for a number of weeks. Similar organizations such as churches can team up to hold study circles together. The study circle's strength is in its flexibility.

What is a community-wide study circle program?

Study circles have their greatest reach and impact when community organizations work together to create large-scale programs. These community-wide programs engage large numbers of citizens—in some cases thousands of people—in study circles on a public issue such as race relations, crime and violence, or education. Participants from study circles across the community often come together for one or more community-wide meetings: a kick-off event, a meeting with public officials, and an action forum that helps the community create coordinated action out of the individual study circles. Broad-

based, cross-sector sponsoring coalitions encourage strong, diverse community participation.

How do community-wide study circle programs come into being?
Typically, a single organization such as a mayor's office, a YWCA, or a county planning commission initiates and staffs the project. In most communities, one organization takes the lead and approaches other key organizations to build a sponsoring coalition. Most community-wide programs have ten to thirty organizations as sponsors or endorsers. Grassroots organizations such as churches, neighborhood associations, businesses, schools, and clubs often take part.

What are the outcomes of community-wide study circle programs?
Community-wide study circle programs foster new connections among community members that lead to new levels of community action. These connections help citizens see how the actions they take as individuals, as members of small groups, and as members of large organizations fit together in the broader scheme of community goals. Community-wide programs also create new connections between citizens and government, both at an institutional level and among parents and teachers, community members and social service providers, residents and police officers.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- ***If you plan on inviting one or more public officials to meet with your study circle—*** Please contact Congressional Exchange (CX) for assistance. The contact information is on the back cover.
- ***If public officials are not a part of your study circle plan—*** CX's sister project, the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), will be happy to offer you assistance. The contact information is on page 38.
- ***For large, community-wide programs—***The Topsfield Foundation, SCRC, and CX help with some of the start-up costs by providing assistance and advice, free of charge, to organizers of large-scale programs.
- ***Finding and funding a coordinator—***Organizing study circle programs is labor-intensive and may require a full-time coordinator. The coordinator's fee or salary can be the largest single expense of the program, but it can be funded in a variety of ways:
  - an organization allows an employee to work on the study circle full-time
  - a community or private foundation provides funds to hire a coordinator
  - a company lends an executive
  - a university assigns a graduate student to coordinate study circles for credit
- ***Most of the other resources required for the program,*** such as training, can be provided in-kind by the organizations in the study circle coalition.

Organizing Study Circles On Growth

Concerns about the pace and character of a community's development go to the heart of people's sense of their basic quality of life. Any number of concerns—traffic congestion, property values and housing, jobs, schools, the environment—are certain to get people talking. The challenge is knowing how to get your study circle effort going, and how to approach a complex issue such as growth.

As an organizer of a study circle program on growth, you will provide a way for people to come together to address an issue that touches everyone. You will be working to welcome and include everyone in the conversation, and to let them know that the study circles will be safe places where they can share their ideas, listen to others and be listened to, and work together to make an impact on the issues that affect their lives.

Consider these two key questions before you begin:

1. ***What are you trying to achieve?***
   Keep in mind that study circles have many uses and many benefits. What do you want your study circle(s) to accomplish? What needs in your community do you think study circles might address? What kinds of benefits do you think the people who participate will want to achieve?

2. ***What will the scope of your study circle program be?***
   As you think about the options listed on the next page, think about the scope of your program in the short term and long term. Study circles can start small—one or two on the same topic. They can stay small, but their effects on the community might be limited. Larger, community-wide programs are more likely to cause long-term change.

OPTION 1 A Single Study Circle

HOW TO BEGIN Invite ten to fifteen key people for three to six sessions.

BENEFITS Mainly educational, creates new relationships, can affect individual behavior.

POSSIBILITIES Can help create an organizing coalition for a larger effort.

ORGANIZING EFFORT Minimal—One person can make this happen easily.

FOR HELP Contact Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) or Congressional Exchange (CX) for a copy of "Starting Small, Thinking Big" from *Planning Community-wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide.*

OPTION 2 A Set of Study Circles Among Young People

HOW TO BEGIN Base your efforts at a high school or in a youth program, and create study circles involving young people and the adults who work with them.

BENEFITS Basically the same as for a single study circle, but a set of circles can also affect the schools and youth programs involved.

POSSIBILITIES Can be a stepping stone for a larger effort involving adults.

ORGANIZING EFFORT Minimal to moderate—Depends on the number of circles involved. You will need time to train facilitators and organize the program.

FOR HELP Contact SCRC or CX for a copy of *Youth Issues, Youth Voices.*

OPTION 3 A Set of Study Circles Involving Paired Organizations

HOW TO BEGIN Start with the leaders of a network of institutions, such as churches, neighborhood associations, clubs, or businesses, and achieve diversity in each study circle by pairing the organizations.

BENEFITS Basically the same as for a single study circle, but pairings can also affect the institutions involved, and perhaps have some impact on problems in the larger community.

POSSIBILITIES You can build up to a community-wide program by first achieving success in particular sectors of the community.

ORGANIZING EFFORT Moderate—This could involve several people from the participating organizations.

FOR HELP Contact SCRC or CX for a copy of *Study Circles in Paired Congregations.*

OPTION 4 A Community-wide Study Circle Program

HOW TO BEGIN The first step is often to hold a pilot study circle among community members who might support a larger program. These people can be the core of a sponsoring coalition that will take the effort to the larger community level.

BENEFITS Same as for a single study circle, but a community-wide program can also lead to problem-solving action by individuals, small groups, large organizations, and the community. These programs can also have a profound effect on people's sense of community.

POSSIBILITIES Can lead to permanent mechanisms for public deliberation and problem solving.

ORGANIZING EFFORT Considerable—Large programs with many circles across sectors of a community require the coordinating effort of several people or groups.

FOR HELP Contact SCRC or CX for a copy of *Planning Community-wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide.*

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- City and county planners who feel they are receiving conflicting advice on land-use policy from different segments of the public.
- Farmers and ranchers concerned about loss of agricultural lands or threats to their right to use their land as they see fit.
- Educators, school boards, parents' organizations and others concerned about overcrowded and underfunded schools.
- Businesses (particularly in the suburbs) that are finding it increasingly difficult to find workers because of a shortage of affordable housing.
- Environmental educators and activists.
- Religious institutions and civil rights organizations concerned about racially and/or economically segregated neighborhoods.
- Builders and developers who feel their businesses are threatened by zoning restrictions, building requirements, and NIMBY ("not in my back yard") sentiments.
- Local government officials concerned that public services are unable to keep up with the pace of growth.
- Members of the business community concerned that explosive growth might lead to a backlash against further economic development.

Organizing For Action

The opportunity for participants to take action is a key component of a successful study circle program. Many of the people and organizations in the program will take part because they hope to make a difference on the issue. Making people aware that you are planning for an action phase helps you recruit. Moreover, when participants know that action is part of the program, it gives an added sense of purpose and energy to the dialogue inside the study circles.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Organizing for action requires planning ahead. Study circle organizers who plan for action from the earliest stages find that it strengthens the entire program and benefits the whole community. These lessons and suggestions will help you plan.

1. **Form an action committee within your organizing coalition.** Since many organizations are attracted to the coalition because they want to help move the community to action, it makes sense to form an action committee. This committee is responsible for creating the conditions that help participants take action, not for deciding what those actions will be. It will help if the people on your action committee represent a mix of professions and approaches to the issue, since action can take many forms.
2. **Create a study circle recording process to track themes.** It is helpful to have a brief session-by-session record of the discussion within each study circle. Records from all the study circles can be combined into a report for the program as a whole; they will be useful in planning action forums for the program; and they can be used to give updates to public officials and journalists. Ask one of the participants to jot down notes on the most important points, particularly the action ideas and main areas of agreement or disagreement. This record doesn't have to be scientific or complex, but it does have to fair and objective. At the end of the session, make sure everyone agrees the summary captures what happened in the session.
3. **Reach out to organizations already working on the issue.** All of these organizations need to know that the study circle program will produce many energized citizens looking for ways to get involved. Ask the organizations how they could use volunteers and how they would like to receive citizen input.
4. **Hold an action forum.** Your best opportunity to galvanize problem-solving efforts comes at the end of each round of study circles. At the kickoff of the study circle, announce the date of the action forum. Invite the study circle participants, coalition members, area organizations working on the issue, and other community members. Use the study circle records to identify themes that emerged from the groups. At the action forum, give people the opportunity to sign up for task forces on those themes. For example, the task forces for a program on growth and development might focus on themes such as preserving open space, creating affordable housing, or promoting regional cooperation. Ask people with some professional expertise in each topic to join that task force. If you are writing a report based on the study circle records, the action forum is an excellent time to release it.
5. **Support the task forces as they move forward.** It is critical for program organizers to stay in touch with the task forces. Help them get off the ground by identifying conveners and setting meeting dates. To keep task force efforts in the public eye, publish a newsletter that reports on their progress, and encourage newspapers and television stations to cover their work. Provide ways for newcomers to join task forces as the program moves along. Finally, celebrate the task force achievements and build on them. One way to do this is through periodic large-group meetings.

■ DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

One of the most common action ideas voiced by study circle participants is the need for more study circles. Take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen your program by involving more people as facilitators, organizers, and coalition members.

It is vital to maintain the spirit of deliberation as citizens and organizations plunge into the action phase. Your participants will benefit from opportunities to work together in small groups and celebrate their achievements at large forums. With careful planning, your study circle program can exemplify democracy in action.

Involving Public Officials

Study circle organizers, participants, and public officials all benefit from working together in study circles. When citizens and officeholders work together to build study circle programs, they strike an informal but powerful bargain. On one hand, citizens gain opportunities for their voices to be heard in a meaningful way; on the other hand, public officials gain the added problem-solving capacity that comes from an engaged and involved citizenry. Citizens and government become partners rather than adversaries, and the entire community benefits.

For more information and assistance on working with public officials, contact **Congressional Exchange.**

BENEFITS TO STUDY CIRCLE ORGANIZERS AND PARTICIPANTS

Public officials offer a unique kind of support to study circle programs. More than any other potential program co-sponsor, public officials can help create structures and situations that allow people to realize the full potential of study circles. Officeholders can:

- raise your program's visibility and credibility
- help recruit both participants and a broad range of sponsoring organizations
- provide unique insights into important public policy questions
- help participants take action on the issues they face
- channel the insights of study circle participants into government policy decisions
- strengthen people's sense that their participation in politics can make a difference

BENEFITS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Public officials also benefit from participating in study circles by:

Reaching out beyond core constituencies. Study circles provide officeholders with opportunities to talk with diverse groups of citizens who care deeply about issues, but who are not locked into advocacy positions. Study circles create a non-hostile environment in which public officials can reach out and meet with people who may fall outside of their core constituencies.

Getting to the essence of public views. Study circles encourage citizens to discuss their personal connections to complex public issues. Participants typically explore the essence of their values, concerns, and aspirations regarding public challenges. Information of this sort is invaluable when it comes time for public officials to make difficult policy decisions on a wide range of issues.

Supporting the search for nongovernmental solutions. Study circle participants are making a serious effort to understand and resolve public issues for themselves. These people believe that government action alone cannot solve all of society's problems. Through face-to-face dialogue, public officials can help study circle participants to think more broadly about the nature of the challenges that confront their communities and the nation, and also help them sort through the pros and cons of different courses of action.

Recognizing active and engaged citizens. Officeholders and good government advocates frequently worry about steadily decreasing rates of voter turnout. Public officials can demonstrate their dedication to creating a more informed and engaged citizenry by meeting with study circle participants who carve time from busy schedules to examine, discuss, and take action on our country's most difficult public challenges.

Building stronger relationships. Study circles provide an opportunity for public officials to reach out and form stronger relationships with their constituents. Citizen participants greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet in settings that are not about campaign-style selling of predetermined policy positions, or about damage control techniques common to most public meetings. The trust that is built in these meetings gives officeholders greater credibility when other difficult issues arise.

ROLES FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

When deciding which public officials you want to invite to join your program, think about the role you would like them to play. Two of the most common roles for officeholders are:

Help with organizing. Local government agencies with a particular interest in your issue may be willing to lend a hand with the basic tasks of organizing a study circle program. For issues related to growth and community change, you might approach the mayor's office, city or county council, economic development agency, environmental protection department, school board, planning office, or transportation department. Working with these sorts of local government agencies often makes it easier to convince higher-level elected officials to join your study circle.

Face-to-face dialogue with study circle participants. The single most powerful thing public officials can do to strengthen your program is to have a candid, face-to-face dialogue with study circle participants. But first, you may have to convince officeholders that it is in their interest to do so. Some public officials will be very comfortable with the give-and-take style of study circles. Others, though, may be wary of new formats that differ from the typical public hearing, town meeting, or focus group. Your best bet is to start by recruiting officeholders who seem likely to enjoy study circles.

■ WHOM TO INVITE

When deciding which public officials to invite to your study circle, you have a wide range of choices—from mayors and city council members, to police chiefs, county planners, and school superintendents, to state legislators and members of Congress. If your main goals are improving the program's visibility and participant recruitment efforts, try to recruit the highest level public official possible.

■ POINTS TO EMPHASIZE

- **This is not a special interest project.** Study circles do not promote any particular partisan viewpoint or special interest position. Citizens participate because study circles allow people to explore different points of view without pushing participants in a particular direction.
- **How much time will it take?** The time commitment for public officials can be as little as a single one-hour meeting or a longer sequence of study circles over a period of weeks.
- **How many citizens will be involved?** This will vary from program to program. But no matter what the size of the meeting, the study circle process will create opportunities for more meaningful dialogue than is found in most other types of public meetings.
- **How are participants recruited**? Every effort is made to recruit a cross-section of the community. This is done by creating a diverse coalition of organizations such as civic associations, clergy associations, schools, businesses and other employers who, in turn, reach out to people they see daily.

> *The single most powerful thing public officials can do to strengthen your program is to have a candid, face-to-face dialogue with study circle participants.*

- **Will the news media be involved?** Some public officials may want the publicity that comes with the news media's presence. Others may prefer to downplay the role of the news media in order to create more opportunities for frank conversation. The news media should be invited only if this is agreed to by everyone. Moreover, comments made during the meeting between study circle participants and officeholders should be off the record.
- **No surprises.** Offer to brief public officials beforehand on the main themes that study circle participants have been discussing regarding their concerns, aspirations, and action plans. Emphasize that the meeting will be a structured one, with a trained facilitator and ground rules. Make sure officeholders understand that this will not be a free-for-all.

■ TRACK THE OUTCOMES

Officeholders will hope to gain a sense of the broad themes that are emerging from the study circle, even though it is not the purpose of study circles to guide people to a consensus position. You can help the officials by tracking the outcomes of the study circles. This will also help the study circle participants as the discussions progress. See page 31, #2, "Create a study circle recording process to track themes."

COMMUNITY GROWTH– THE STATE AND FEDERAL CONNECTION

The question of which public official to involve in your study circle is an important one. It may seem that most of the obvious decisions and actions that shape how your community grows take place at the local level. Talking with a local official may be the most logical place to begin. These officials are important and can offer much to your study circle.

Consider your state and federal public officials, too. They are involved in making policy decisions that affect how your community is likely to grow and what you are able to do about it. These decisions include:

- Funding for all sorts of ***transportation*** projects
- Regulations and programs designed to ***protect the environment***
- State ***growth management*** and ***land-use*** laws
- Incentives for building ***affordable housing*** in certain areas
- Funding to support local ***economic development*** efforts
- Management of ***public lands***
- Business and personal deductions on ***income taxes***
- Location of ***state and federal facilities*** such as post offices, prisons, motor vehicle bureaus, and military bases

State and federal public officials need to hear what community members have to say about growth. It helps them understand citizens' concerns and ideas. It can also be useful as these officials help make policies that work better for communities that are grappling with growth issues.

■ STRUCTURE THE DIALOGUE

Your goal as an organizer should be to create situations in which public officials and citizen-participants can experience the same sort of meaningful, give-and-take dialogue that usually takes place in study circles. In a sense, you are simply expanding the circle of participation to include public officials.

Congressional Exchange meetings between study circle participants and public officials often take place within the context of a community-wide study circle program. Even with hundreds of participants, it is fairly easy to retain the intimacy of study circle dialogue while creating opportunities for meaningful communication. The "fish bowl" process is one technique you can try.

The "fish bowl" process

1. At the end of Session 3, ask each study circle to select one or two representatives. These people will have a chance in Session 4 to report on some of the main themes that are emerging from their study circles.
2. Set up the room for the Session 4 meeting with a center "fish bowl" circle that includes the study circle representatives and the public official. The other participants sit in a larger circle surrounding the fish bowl.
3. For the first 30 minutes or so, the study circle participants meet without the public official. This allows people from the different study circles to review the ground rules, get acquainted, and brief each other on the main themes that are emerging from their respective study circles.
4. Once the public official joins the center circle, proceed with the process outlined in Part 2 of Session 4, page 18. As an icebreaker, ask several of the study circle representatives to talk about what their respective groups have been discussing. Next, open the conversation to the public official and the other representatives in the center circle. Allow about 30 to 60 minutes for this part of the dialogue.
5. For the final 30 minutes of dialogue, open the floor to those participants sitting in the outer circle. Remind everyone that this is still a study circle session and a time for a give-and-take discussion. Avoid a question-and-answer session.
6. Close the meeting by asking both the public official and study circle participants to comment on what they have learned from the discussion.

RESOURCES

For Further Discussion And Action

This is a sampling of the many resources available to inform your study circle discussions and to move beyond your study circle to more learning, discussion, and action. Contact information is current as of April 1998.

ORGANIZATIONS

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO)
25 S. Ewing, Suite 214
Helena, MT 59601
Phone 406.443.7272
E-mail aero@desktop.org
Dedicated to promoting sustainable resource use and rural community vitality. One of its publications, *Big Sky or Big Sprawl: What Transportation and Land-Use Decisions Cost Montana Communities*, looks in depth at the costs of certain types of development. The research methods and information are applicable to many rapid growth scenarios.

American Farm Bureau Federation
225 Touhy Ave.
Park Ridge, IL 60068
Phone 847.685.8600
Web site www.fb.com
Active in local, state, national, and international issues that affect the farming community. Provides education, professional development, and networking assistance to county and state farm bureaus.

American Farmland Trust
1920 N Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.659.5170
Web site www.farmland.org
Works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote environmentally sound farming practices. Programs include public education, technical assistance in policy development, and direct farmland protection projects. Publications include research findings on agricultural land threatened by urban sprawl and information on various approaches to, and benefits of, protecting farmland.

Cascade Policy Institute
813 SW Alder Street, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97205
Phone 503.242.0900
Web site www.cascadepolicy.org
Promotes answers to Oregon's public policy questions from a limited-government, free-market perspective. While focused primarily on local issues, CPI offers a broader perspective on government intervention in mass transit, public education, and land use.

Center for Cooperatives
University of Wisconsin
230 Taylor Hall
427 Lorch Street
Madison, WI 53703-1503
Phone 608.262.3981
Studies and promotes cooperative action as a means of meeting economic and social needs of people. Works in rural and urban areas in the U.S. and overseas. Develops, promotes, and coordinates educational programs, technical assistance, and research on the cooperative form of business.

The Center for Living Democracy
RR #1, Black Fox Road
Brattleboro, VT 05301
Phone 802.254.1234
Web site www.livingdemocracy.org
Supports grassroots efforts to regenerate our democracy. Publications include a quarterly newsletter, *Doing Democracy*, which highlights community success stories.

Center for Neighborhood Technology
2125 West North Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647
Phone 773.278.4800
Web site www.cnt.org
Promotes public policies, new resources, and accountable authority that support sustainable, just and vital urban communities. Its "Metropolitan Initiative" aims to recraft the relationship between the federal government, states and metropolitan areas. Publishes the bimonthly magazine, *The Neighborhood Works*.

Equity Trust
539 Beech Pond Rd.
Voluntown, CT 06384
Phone 860.376.6174
Supports the development of community land trusts and community supported agriculture. Provides technical assistance and operates loan programs in the U.S. and around the world.

Greater Yellowstone Coalition
P.O. Box 1874
Bozeman, MT 59771
Phone 406.586.1593
Web site www.desktop.org/gyc
Works to preserve and protect the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the unique quality of life it sustains. Publications include *Tools for Managing Growth in the Greater Yellowstone Area*, a booklet that outlines growth management tools appropriate for communities across the country.

Harbinger Institute
P.O. Box 689
Bridger, MT 59014
Phone 406.662.3244
E-mail harbinger@mcn.net
Provides consulting services that support community, organizational, and personal development. Specialties include developing public discussion materials, and participation and decision-making processes. Conducts training workshops for facilitators, trainers, and citizens in workplaces and communities nationwide.

Institute for Community Economics
57 School Street
Springfield, MA 01105-1331
Phone 413.746.8660
Helps low-income communities address fundamental problems related to lack of control over land, housing, and capital. Provides technical assistance and financing to community land trusts and other local groups. Operates a revolving loan fund that communities

can use to start a land trust, community loan fund, or other community organization. Publications include the quarterly newsletter, *Community Economics*.

Institute for Cooperative Community Development
P.O. Box 16193
Manchester, NH 03106
Phone 603.644.3124
Committed to building an economy that works for people. Helps communities construct competent, democratically-controlled, and results-oriented development organizations. Links community economic development efforts with people who can provide assistance. Offers an extensive collection of publications.

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol St., NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
Phone 202.962.3680
Web site www.icma.org
Aims to strengthen the quality of local government through professional management. Its "Smart Growth Network" provides information on trends and tools for improving the quality of development in communities.

The Johnson Foundation
33 East Four Mile Road
Racine, WI 53401-0547
Phone 414.681.3343
Web site www.johnsonfdn.org
Encourages discussion on a number of program interests, including fostering sustainable community development and building the civil and civic community. Provides research information, conference reports, and conference facilities. Publishes the *Wingspread Journal* quarterly.

Joint Center for Sustainable Communities
The National Association of Counties
440 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone 202.393.6226
OR
US Conference of Mayors
1620 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone 202.293.7330
Web site www.usmayors.org/sustainable
Collaborative project of the National Association of Counties and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Helps communities become more self-sufficient and sustainable. Works primarily by providing local elected officials with advice, information, and financial support.

Land Trust Alliance
1319 F Street, NW, Suite 501
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.638.4725
Web site www.lta.org
Supports conservation in communities across the country by providing information, training, and resources to people who work through voluntary land trust organizations. Publications include *ExpertLink: A National Directory of Professionals Who Assist Land Trusts* and *Conservation Easement Handbook*.

Land Use Forum Network, Inc. (LUFNET)
P.O. Box 266
Mount Hermon Rd.
Hope, NJ 07844
Phone 908.459.4418
Web site www.landuse.org
Provides free help to citizen groups to resolve issues around unwanted land development. Web site provides a step-by-step outline for a collaborative planning process.

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
113 Brattle Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone 617.661.3016
Studies and teaches land policy, including land economics and land taxation. Uses multidisciplinary research, courses, and conferences. Publications include *Alternatives to Sprawl*, an exploration of sprawl, its causes and effects, and alternative patterns of development.

The Local Government Commission
1414 K Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone 916.448.1198
Web site www.lgc.org
Provides technical assistance to local governments working to create and sustain healthy environments, strong economies, and social equity. Fosters peer networking opportunities, serves as a liaison between city and county officials, and suggests policy alternatives for addressing environmental and social problems. Publications include the monthly newsletter, *Livable Places Update*, and guides to land-use planning and development.

National Association of Home Builders
1201 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone 202.822.0200
Web site www.nahb.com
Represents the homebuilding industry; provides technical assistance to builders; and also lobbies Congress on behalf of legislation favorable to the construction and homebuilding industries.

National Association of Regional Councils
1700 K Street, NW, Suite 1300
Washington, DC 20006
Phone 202.457.0710
Web site www.narc.org
Offers technical assistance, educational services, and public policy support to local government officials. Its educational programs, conferences, and specialized publications help regional and other local government officials understand and manage diversity and change in their communities. Publishes *The Regionalist*, a quarterly periodical.

National Civic League
1445 Market Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80202-1728
Phone 303.571.4343
Web site www.ncl.org
Provides technical assistance, publishing, and research to foster the practice of collaborative problem-solving and democratic decision making. Publications include *The Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook* and the quarterly *National Civic Review*. Initiatives include the "Alliance for National Renewal," a network of community-building organizations that address civic problems.

National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.626.3000
Web site www.nlc.org
Membership organization of local governments and state municipal leagues. Offers training, technical assistance, and information to municipal officers to help

them improve the quality of local government. Also undertakes research and analysis on topics and issues of importance to our nation's cities and towns.

National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Phone 202.588.6000

Private, nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949. Dedicated to preserving the nation's cultural heritage. The Trust's "National Main Street Center" serves as a clearinghouse for information, technical assistance, research, and advocacy on preservation-based community revitalization. Publications include *Smart States, Better Communities: How State Governments Can Help Citizens Preserve Their Communities.*

1000 Friends of Oregon
534 SW Third Ave., Suite 300
Portland, OR 97204

Phone 503.497.1000
Web site www.teleport.com/~winchest/test/homepag1.html

Focuses on land use, protection of agricultural and forest lands, community growth, and citizen participation in land use, planning and development. 1000 Friends is a model for similar community organizations throughout the nation, promoting "common-sense planning and managed growth." Provides land-use information, tracks legislation, and opens opportunities for citizens to be involved in the development of their communities.

Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy
755 Sansome Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94111

Phone 415.989.0833
Web site www.pacificresearch.org

Advocates policies that emphasize free economy, private initiative, and limited government on issues such as education, the environment, and social welfare. Fosters a better understanding of the principles of a free society among government leaders, academia, the media, and the business community.

Partners for Livable Communities
1429 21st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Phone 202.887.5990
Web site
www.ncl.org/anr/partners/plc.htm

Project of the National Civic League; an international network of organizations committed to improving civic life through economic development and social equity. Creates realistic strategies and programs for its members by using publications, networking services, leadership training, and technical assistance.

President's Council on Sustainable Development
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Phone 202.408.5296
Web site www.whitehouse.gov/PCSD

Advises the President on sustainable development and promotes new approaches to integrate economic, environmental, and equity issues. Conducts outreach to educate the public on the importance of sustainable growth.

Program for Community Problem Solving
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Phone 202.783.2961

Helps communities develop a civic culture that nurtures and supports community problem solving. Offers training programs, presentations, and coaching services to communities directly and through its sponsoring organizations: National League of Cities, International Downtown Association, National Civic League, American Chamber of Commerce Executives, International City/County Management Association. Publications include *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*, and *Building the Collaborative Community: A Select Bibliography for Community Leaders.*

Regional Civic Organization Network
50 Public Square, Suite 843
Cleveland, OH 44113

Phone 216.241.5340

Serves as a clearinghouse of information for regional organizations looking to share approaches and solutions to regional problems. Provides research, technical support, and literature, including *The Regional Civic Organization Network Directory.*

Rocky Mountain Institute
1739 Snowmass Creek Road
Snowmass, CO 81654-9199

Phone 970.927.3851
Web site www.rmi.org

Fosters the efficient and sustainable use of resources as a path to global security. Programs cover a variety of areas including transportation, water use, and collaborative, community-based economic development. Publications include *Paying for Growth, Prospering from Development*, which points out the economic costs and benefits of growth for cities and towns.

Rural Economic Policy Program
The Aspen Institute
1333 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Suite 1070
Washington, DC 20036

Phone 202.736.5800
Web site www.aspeninst.org/dir/polpro/REPP/REPP1.html

Fosters collaborative learning, leadership, and innovation to advance rural community and economic development in the U.S. Publications include *Rural Communities in the Path of Development: Stories of Growth, Conflict and Cooperation*, which discusses growth in rural communities and describes a strategy for sustainable development.

Sierra Business Council
Box 2428
Truckee, CA 96160

Phone 916.582.4800
E-mail info@sbcouncil.org

Works to secure the economic and environmental health of the Sierra Nevada region. Its publication, *Planning for Prosperity: Building Successful Communities in the Sierra Nevada*, uses a case study approach to cover a wide range of development issues. Although written about Sierra Nevada communities, its lessons are useful in other rural areas.

Small Towns Institute
Third and Poplar
P.O. Box 517
Ellensberg, WA 98926

Phone 509.925.1830

Provides information on small-town living, focusing on historic preservation, employment resources, community development, and environmental programs. Publishes the journal, *Small Town*, which uses case studies to explore the challenges small towns face.

Sonoran Institute
7290 E. Broadway Blvd., #M
Tucson, AZ 85710
Phone 520.290.0828
E-mail sonoran@igc.apc.org
Promotes community-based strategies that preserve the ecological integrity of protected lands while meeting the economic aspirations of adjoining landowners and communities. Its mission is based on the conviction that community-driven and inclusive approaches to conservation produce the most effective results.

Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC)
P.O. Box 203
Pomfret, CT 06258
Phone 860.928.2616
E-mail scrc@neca.com
Project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the U.S. SCRC helps communities organize study circles—small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions. Produces topical issue guides and "how-to" publications; provides organizing and networking assistance. Often works in partnership with its sister project, Congressional Exchange (CX).

Surface Transportation Policy Project
1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.466.2636
Web site www.transact.org
Network of diverse organizations, coalitions, and grassroots groups that aims to ensure that transportation policy and investments help conserve energy, protect environmental and esthetic quality, strengthen the economy, promote social equity, and make communities more livable. Publications include *The Directory of Transportation Reform Resources*, which is available as a book or as a searchable database on STPP's website.

The Thoreau Institute
14417 SE Laurie
Oak Grove, OR 97267
Phone 503.652.7049
Web site www.ti.org
Conducts research, education, and consulting to find ways to protect the environment without big government. Publishes *Different Drummer* magazine and reports on natural resources and the environment.

Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson St., NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20007-5201
Phone 202.624.7000
Direct research questions to Rick Davis, information specialist—
Phone 202.624.7117
Web site www.uli.org/
Provides information on urban planning, growth, and development. Priorities include "smart growth," urban revitalization, brownfields, regionalism, tax base sharing, transportation, and affordable housing. Publications include *Pulling Together: A Land Use and Development Consensus Building Manual*.

WEB SITES

In tandem with the web sites for organizations listed in the guide, these sites offer a sampling of Internet resources on growth and community development.

Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development
www.sustainable.doe.gov

Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution
www.brook.edu/ES/URBANCEN/URBAN_hp.htm

Citistates Group
www.citistates.com
Highlights examples and resources for regionalism; includes index of Neal Peirce's columns.

Civic Practices Network
www.cpn.org
Online journal of tools, stories, and "best practices" of community empowerment and civic renewal.

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Resource Page
www.ezec.gov/index.html

EPA Transportation Partners: Links Between Transportation and the Environment
www.epa.gov/tp

Green Mountain Institute for Environmental Democracy
www.gmied.org
Includes links to financial and technical assistance resources for collaborative decision-making, especially on environmental issues.

ISTEA information and links to Surface Transportation Policy Project
www.istea.org
ISTEA is the federal government's Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Web site provides daily updates, analysis, and strategies for action on transportation policy issues.

Planner's Web: City and Regional Planning Resources
www.plannersweb.com

Sustainable Communities Network
www.sustainable.org
Publishes resource guide on sustainable development. Sections include "Creating Community," "Living Sustainably," "Smart Growth," and a reference library.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.hud.gov

U.S. Department of Transportation
www.dot.gov

University of Arizona College of Agriculture, Water Resources Research Center
ag.arizona.edu/partners
Contains the *Partnership Handbook*, a resource for community-based groups addressing natural resource, land use, or environmental issues.

PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Alexander, Christopher et al. 1987 *A Pattern Language* London: Oxford University Press. An extensive exploration of patterns in design and how they affect us emotionally and socially. An exceptional analysis of how urban development both reflects who we are and dictates how we experience daily life.

Bank of America et al. 1996 *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to Fit the New California* San Francisco: Bank of America Corporation

Bauen, Rebecca et al. 1996 *Sustainable Community Checklist* Seattle: Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington. A workbook designed to help communities involve residents in exploring sustainability and moving forward in community action.

Brower, David et al. 1984 *Managing Development in Small Towns* Washington, DC: Planner's Press. An extensive look at the tools and techniques that small towns can use to manage growth.

Calthorpe, Peter 1993 *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press. Offers alternatives to existing building patterns and development policies, favoring a more sustainable approach toward growth.

Carlson, Daniel with Lisa Wormser and Cy Ulberg 1985 *At Road's End: Transportation and Land-Use Choices for Communities* Washington, DC: Island Press

Chattanooga Venture 1992 *Chattanooga: a Community with a Vision* Chattanooga, TN: Chattanooga Venture. Video. Short documentary showing how community members were involved in Chattanooga's Vision 2000 project. Includes *The Facilitator's Manual.* (Chattanooga Venture, 506 Broad Street, Chattanooga, TN 37402.)

Chinitz, Benjamin 1990 "Growth Management: Good for the Town, Bad for the Nation?" *Journal of the American Planning Association,* Winter. Argues that local growth management imposes more costs than benefits.

Dodge, William R. 1996 *Regional Excellence: Governing Together to Compete Globally and Flourish Locally* Washington, DC: National League of Cities. Documents the upsurge of collaboration and public/private partnerships in regions across the U.S.

Durning, Alan Thein 1996 *The Car and the City: 24 Steps to Safe Streets and Healthy Communities* Seattle, WA: Northwest Environment Watch. Overview of origins, dynamics, and solutions to the problem of sprawl in the Pacific Northwest. An informative book for readers in any part of the country.

Engwicht, David 1993 *Reclaiming Our Towns and Cities: Better Living with Less Traffic* Philadelphia: New Society Publishers. Offers new perspectives, concrete examples, and practical hints for those who want to make their towns and cities more livable.

Garreau, Joel 1991 *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* New York: Doubleday. Chronicles the growing trend of suburbanization in America. From the creation of downtowns, to suburbs, to malls, and finally to edge cities, Garreau explores the economic and sociological catalysts behind the growth of modern America.

Goldsmith, Stephen 1997 *The Twenty-first Century City: Resurrecting Urban America* Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing. Written by the innovative mayor of Indianapolis, offers a practical, inside look at how that city turned around its urban decline while cutting taxes.

Gordon, Peter and Harry W. Richardson 1998 "Why Sprawl Is Good" Cascade Policy Institute on www.CascadePolicy.org/growth/gordon.htm

Hayward, Steven F. 1994 *Preserving the American Dream: The Facts about Suburban Communities and Housing Choice* San Francisco: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy. Argues that suburban housing development prepares the way for economic growth, is a positive contributor to California's economy, and is the cornerstone of opportunity for families. Counters the conventional wisdom that stigmatizes suburban housing growth as sprawl.

Hiss, Tony 1991 *The Experience of Place* New York: Vintage Books. Describes how we can find practical ways to improve the look, feel, and usefulness of different types of places by paying close attention to the many ways urban and rural landscapes affect us.

Howe, Jim et al. 1997 *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* Washington, DC: Island Press. Looks at building successful communities adjacent to key public lands. Contains critical exploration of tourism, quality of life, visioning, regulation, and assessment of local assets and resources. Provides guidance for building on local assets and balancing landowner and community interests.

Hughes, Ken et al. 1996 *Growth in New Mexico: Impacts and Options* Santa Fe: Local Government Division. Impacts of growth in New Mexico and options for managing growth. Its comprehensive approach and exploration of strategies being used in other states are of interest to anyone concerned with state and local government policies.

Jacobs, Jane 1993 *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* New York, NY: Modern Library. At a time when the term "inner city" is synonymous with poverty and destitution, this text reminds us that cities are the centers of civilization, of business, and of culture.

Katz, Peter 1993 *The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community* New York: McGraw-Hill. Walks the reader through planning strategies as they affect regions, neighborhoods, and individual blocks, and provides case studies and examples.

Kretzman, John P. and John L. McKnight 1993 *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* Chicago: ACTA Publications. Describes how to strengthen communities by building on local assets instead of focusing on needs. Provides many examples from communities across the country.

Kunstler, James Howard 1994 *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape* New York: Touchstone Books. Critique of the government and industrial forces that have fueled the suburbanization of America. Explores the practice of urban planning based on the automobile and its result: endless tract home developments and strip malls, shadowed by poor, decaying inner cities.

Lappe, Frances Moore and Paul Martin Du Bois 1994 *The Quickening of America: Rebuilding Our Nation, Remaking Our Lives* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. Grassroots testimonials to the power of citizen action. Describes the approaches, successes and challenges met by community organizers across the country.

Lummis, Cynthia ed. 1997 *Wyoming, Like No Place on Earth: Ways to Conserve Wyoming's Wonderful Open Lands—A Guide Book* Cheyenne, WY: The Governor's Office. Outlines the issues associated with the loss and protection of open space and describes landowner tools and regulatory techniques that can be used to manage development to preserve open space. Appropriate for anyone interested in land conservation.

Moe, Richard and Carter Wilkie 1997 *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl* New York: Henry Holt and Co. Citing the social and economic consequences of suburban development and automobile-based planning, authors call for a commitment to inner-city restoration and the revitalizing of our urban communities.

Mantell, Michael et al. 1989 *Creating Successful Communities: A Guidebook to Growth Management Strategies* Washington, DC: Island Press. Guide to local land-use planning and conservation tools.

O'Toole, Randal 1996 *The Vanishing Automobile and Other Urban Myths: A Critique of New Urbanism & Portland's Metro 2040 Plan* Oak Grove, OR: The Thoreau Institute. Argues against the vision and strategies of "new urbanist" approaches to urban development, offering an alternative to planning that the author calls "People 2000."

Orfield, Myron 1997 *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press. Describes a Twin Cities (Minnesota) coalition of citizen groups, government, and members of the business community that formed a political alliance between the central cities, declining inner suburbs, and developing suburbs.

Peirce, Neal R. 1993 *Citistates: How Urban American Can Prosper in a Competitive World* Washington, DC: Seven Locks Press. Challenges the traditional divisions between urban and suburban communities; argues for broader, metropolitan solutions to development issues.

Rusk, David 1993 *Cities Without Suburbs* Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press. Offers a detailed account of the social and economic forces that have spurred and shaped urban growth. Suggests strategies to change current patterns of development.

Vermont Natural Resources Council 1992 *Citizen's Action Guide* Montpelier, VT: Vermont Natural Resources Council. Guidelines for getting citizens involved, evaluating and responding to development proposals, and conserving and protecting community resources.

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Debra L. Bassert, Senior Land Use Planner, National Association of Home Builders, Washington, DC
John Charles, Environmental Policy Director, Cascade Policy Institute, Portland, OR
David Cornicelli, Environmental Education Director, Seventh Generation, Elyria, OH
John A. Fenner, Executive Director, Transylvania Dispute Settlement Center, Brevard, NC
Julia Freedgood, Director of Farmland Advisory Services, American Farmland Trust, Northampton, MA
Dennis Glick, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, MT
Roz Greenstein, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, MA
Tracy Grubbs, Associate Director, Sierra Business Council, Truckee, CA
Steven Hayward, Bradley Fellow, The Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC
Tony Hiss, Taub Urban Research Center, New York University, NY
Ross Korves, Deputy Chief Economist and Associate Director, American Farm Bureau Federation, Washington, DC
Jim Kunde, Executive Director, Coalition to Improve Management in State and Local Government, Arlington, TX
Shelley Metzenbaum, Senior Fellow and Visiting Professor, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
Lee Novak, Research Associate, Rocky Mountain Institute, Snowmass, CO
Kate O'Neill, Executive Director, The Roundtable Center, Portland, ME
Randal O'Toole, Economist, The Thoreau Institute, Oak Grove, OR
Judith Pedersen-Benn, Community Education Consultant, Petersen, MN
William Potapchuck, Executive Director, Program for Community Problem Solving, Washington, DC
Brian Reilly, Program Officer, The Johnson Foundation, Racine WI
John Shepard, Assistant Director, The Sonoran Institute, Tucson, AZ
Mary L. Walsh, Director, Climate Change Learning and Information Center, Amherst, MA
Hank Warren, The Roundtable Center, Cape Elizabeth, ME

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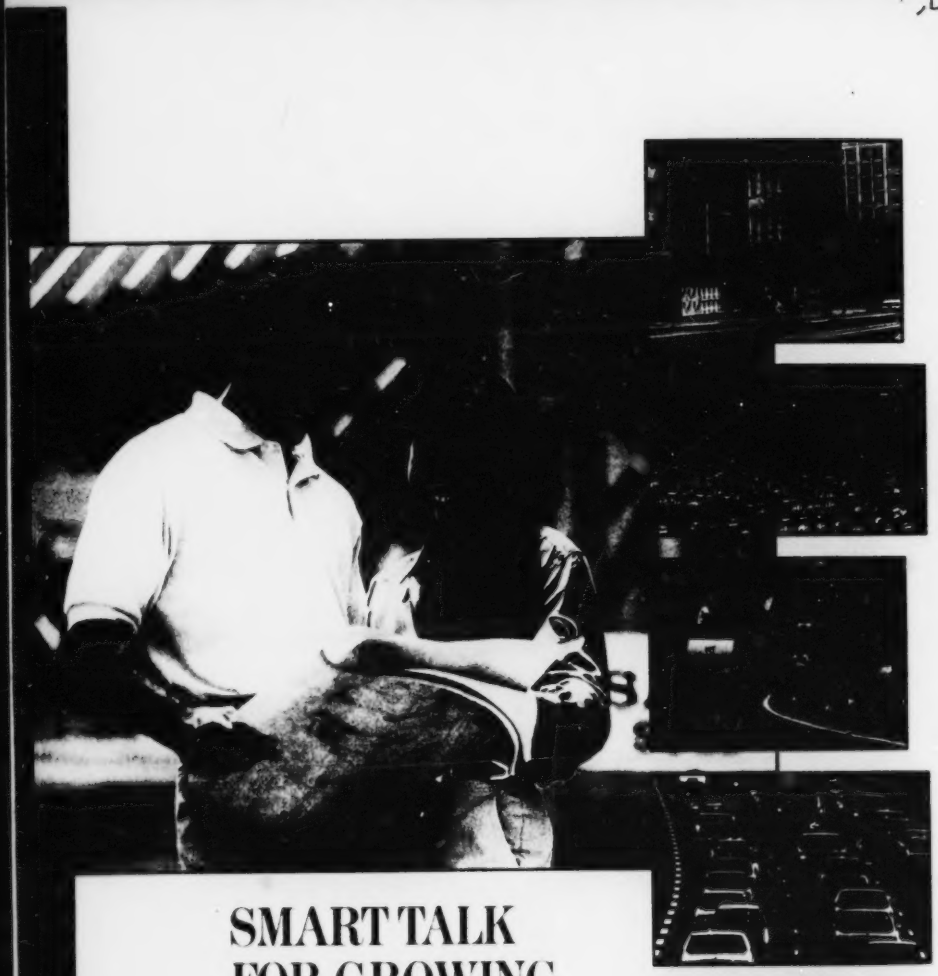
Congressional Exchange

1120 G Street NW • Suite 730
Washington DC 20005

Phone 202.393.1441
Fax 202.626.4978
E-mail congex@congex.org

This guide is a manual for study circle organizers and facilitators. The Busy Citizen's edition, a companion handout for study circle participants, is also available from Congressional Exchange.

A project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc.



SMART TALK FOR GROWING COMMUNITIES

Meeting the Challenges of Growth and Development

EST COPY AVAILABLE

The Busy Citizen's guide for public dialogue and problem solving

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Fax 202.626.4978
E-mail congex@congex.org

Congressional Exchange (CX) is a project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of life in the United States. CX carries out this mission by bringing citizens and public officials together in study circles—small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions—about the nation's most important challenges. CX provides technical assistance and publications for individuals and organizations who are working to promote study circle dialogue between citizens and public officials, with a particular emphasis on members of Congress.

Congressional Exchange often works in partnership with its sister project, the **Study Circles Resource Center** (SCRC). Much of SCRC's work centers on promoting the development of community-wide study circle programs organized by broad-based sponsoring coalitions and involving large numbers of participants. Contact SCRC for help with organizing community-wide study circle programs. (Please see the inside back cover for SCRC's contact information.)

WRITING AND RESEARCH
Harbinger Institute
Michele Archie and Howard D Terry

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE
Reem Ghandour

EDITING AND DESIGN
Two Ducks Design
Susie Duckworth
Designer
Carolyn Duckworth
Editor and Project Manager

MANAGING EDITOR AND PROJECT DIRECTOR
Patrick L. Scully

Cover Photo Credits
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INTRODUCTION

Why Should We Take Part In Study Circles On Growth?

ARE YOU...

- *Stuck in traffic?*
- *Worried about how your community will pay for new schools and sewer systems?*
- *Watching fields being turned into subdivisions?*
- *Questioning whether you can afford your own home?*
- *Afraid to open your property tax bill?*
- *Puzzled by new strips of commercial and housing development?*
- *Wondering what's happening to the way of life you cherish?*

WHAT IF...

- *The economy seems more vital than before?*
- *Newcomers are bringing welcomed energy to civic and cultural activities?*
- *The value of your home or land is on the rise?*
- *You now have more convenience and choices?*
- *You appreciate the lifestyle afforded by the new homes and housing developments?*

These are ALL signs of rapidly growing communities!

Rapid growth changes communities. It creates new choices, new problems, new opportunities, and new dilemmas. It can raise a new set of issues or sharpen old ones. These "growing pains" aren't likely to go away if they're simply left alone. That's why more and more communities are coming together in study circles to find ways of making growth work for them.

WHAT IS "GROWTH"?

Communities' growing pains often can be traced back to two main kinds of growth: One is a rapidly growing population. The other is expanding physical development—the growing, often sprawling, "footprint" that a community makes on the land.

In some communities, these two kinds of growth go hand in hand. For example, in rural areas across the country, population is growing and physical development is expanding. Many of these communities are faced with the challenge of "rural sprawl"—the effect of people building houses far apart from one another over what was once open countryside outside of town. Some people feel that this kind of growth makes it difficult to keep a small-town atmosphere and the rural feel of the surrounding landscape. The effects are felt most strongly in the fastest-growing places—those that attract retirees, serve as recreational centers, provide access to public lands, or sit at what one journalist terms "the rural limits of a commute" to jobs in a metropolitan area.

In other places, physical development is expanding faster than the population. This is true in many metropolitan areas. For example, between 1970 and 1990, population in the Cleveland area fell by 11 percent. But the urbanized area around

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Cleveland—the shopping centers, business districts, and housing developments—grew by one-third. In metropolitan areas across the country, central cities and older suburbs are losing population while newer suburbs, "edge cities," and brand new developments expand.

HOW CAN STUDY CIRCLES HELP?

Study circles bring people together to talk about an issue. By talking about growth, participants can gain a clearer understanding of how and why growth is happening, and what effects it's having. Participants also get new ideas about what they can do to help their community grow into the kind of place they are happy to call home.

To make progress on the issues raised by rapid growth, you need to reach out to people throughout the community. Study circles address this need by providing a place where all kinds of people can feel comfortable. Moreover, study circles can serve as springboards—participants often become more active on other community issues.

Study circles also provide a way to bring citizens together with public officials from City Hall to Congress to work on the public policy aspects of these issues. At its heart, growth is a community issue. But the solutions to growth issues can't be found or carried out strictly at the local level. Each community's situation and choices are influenced by outside forces. These include patterns of development within the region; state land use, school funding, and economic development policies; federal environmental regulations and transportation policies; and international trade agreements. Coming together in study circle sessions with public officials helps citizens understand this broader context. And public officials benefit from citizens' perspectives and ideas.

No group, whether it's a chamber of commerce, civic group, city council, county government, state legislature, or federal agency, can find the answers to growth issues alone. Study circles on growth can be an important step in bringing your community together in its search for understanding and solutions.

WHAT'S IN THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE?

Smart Talk for Growing Communities includes a series of five sessions that can help you move from understanding to effective action in partnership with fellow community members and government leaders.

SESSION 1

How is growth changing our community?

Get to know other group members, listen to each others' hopes and concerns for your community, and talk about how growth is affecting your community.

SESSION 2

Why is our community experiencing these changes?

Explore what growth looks like in your community and why it's happening.

SESSION 3
What are our options for addressing growth issues?
Consider some of your options for addressing the issues that growth raises, using approaches from other communities to generate new ideas.

SESSION 4
Meeting with public officials
Meet with public officials and participants in other study circles to discuss how your community might address the challenges of growth.

SESSION 5
Shaping the future: What can we do in our community?
Identify individual and community actions that can help solve growth problems and move your community in the direction of your brightest visions.

You'll also find a glossary that defines key terms, and resources to help you with further learning and action.

WHAT IS A STUDY CIRCLE?

The study circle is a simple process for small-group deliberation. Study circles create a setting for personal learning, building community, and problem solving. Here are some of their defining characteristics:

- A study circle involves 10–15 people who come together to talk with each other about public issues. They meet regularly—usually at least three times—over a period of weeks or months and work in a democratic and collaborative way.
- A study circle is facilitated by a person who serves the group by keeping the discussion focused and asking thought-provoking questions. The study circle facilitator does not act as an expert on the issue.
- A study circle looks at an issue from many points of view. Study circle facilitators and discussion materials help participants consider different viewpoints, feel comfortable expressing their own ideas, and explore areas of common ground.
- A study circle begins by exploring participants' personal connections to an issue. The discussion then expands to consider a range of views about the issue and how it might be resolved. Finally, the study circle focuses on what individuals, organizations, and communities can do to address the issue. Study circles often prompt people to take action individually and together with other community members.

Study circles can take place within organizations such as schools, workplaces, neighborhood associations, clubs, congregations, or government agencies. In such settings, a single group of study circle participants meeting for just a few weeks can lay important groundwork for positive change.

Study circles achieve their greatest potential, however, when many are going on at the same time in the community. These community-wide programs usually have many diverse organizations as sponsors or endorsers. Organizers of community-wide programs strive to involve as many members of the community as possible in the study circles.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY CIRCLE

In a study circle, how you talk with each other is as important as what you talk about. These tips will help make your study circle enjoyable, thought-provoking, and productive:

- ***Attend every study circle session.*** If everyone in your group makes a good effort to be at each meeting, you will build trust and familiarity. This is essential for a conversation that explores the depths of how you feel and think about the issue. And you won't feel the need to review the details of each session for those who did not attend.
- ***Be prepared.*** Read the discussion materials before you come to each session. Each part of the study circle guide offers questions, viewpoints, and ideas to help you examine the issue. By reading the materials ahead of time, you will be ready to jump right in to the discussion. The guide also suggests simple things you can do to keep your own learning and reflection going between study circle meetings.
- ***Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion.*** The study circle facilitator's job is to keep the discussion moving and on track. In the dictionary, the word "facilitate" means "to make easier." But participants are also responsible for "making things easier"! At the first session of your study circle, your group will set ground rules about what kind of discussions you want to have and how you want to treat each other. Stick with these ground rules and help others do the same.
- ***Remember that you are not alone.*** If your study circle is part of a larger, community-wide program, many other study circles may be going on at the same time in your area. Join with them for a kick-off session, to meet with public officials, or for a wrap-up discussion about taking action on the issue. These joint meetings help build momentum for addressing the issue across the community. Even if no other study circles are going on at the same time, remember that others in your community are concerned about the issues that you are discussing.

GROUND RULES FOR USEFUL DISCUSSIONS

Use these suggestions as a starting point for coming up with your own ground rules to guide your study circle.

1. Everyone gets a fair hearing.
2. Share "air time."
3. One person speaks at a time. Don't interrupt.
4. Speak for yourself, not for others.
5. If you are offended, say so.
6. You can disagree, but don't personalize it. Stick to the issue. No name-calling or stereotyping.
7. Everyone helps the facilitator keep the discussion moving and on track.

SESSION 1

How Is Growth Changing Our Community?

This first session lays the groundwork for the rest of your study circle. It's an opportunity to get to know other group members and share your hopes and concerns for your community. You will also talk about how your community is growing, and the changes that growth brings with it.

PART 1 Discussion starter

(30 minutes)

- What do you like most about living here? What makes you glad you live here?
- What concerns brought you to these discussions about growth?

PART 2 How is growth affecting our community? *(60 minutes)*

Many similarities exist in the ways that communities across the country are growing and changing shape. But each community is unique, too. Your community is experiencing its own set of changes and responding to growth in distinctive ways.

Your personal experiences and perspectives are important starting points in understanding what's happening in your community. What does growth look like where you live? What effects is it having on your community?

Each of the following views is written in the voice of someone who holds that view. Use these views to start talking about how growth is affecting your community and to develop your own ideas.

VIEWS

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE VIEWS

- *Which view is closest to your own? Why? What experiences and beliefs have helped form your views?*
- *Think about a view you don't agree with. What might lead someone else to agree with that view?*
- *What points of view would you like to add?*

VIEW 1

Our town is losing its unique character.

The way our community is growing is destroying the things that make this an attractive and pleasant place to live. The strip developments with their boxy stores and big parking lots are ugly and impersonal. Houses seem to be everywhere, even on the hillsides and in the farmlands and forests surrounding town. We've lost the natural setting for our community. And we are abandoning the traditional look of our town's older neighborhoods as we build new subdivisions with row after row of similar houses with no sidewalks or front porches.

VIEW 2

The economy is thriving.

Our community's economy has picked up and this is a better place to live. New jobs and businesses have brought a sense of vitality. People have plenty of choices about where to shop—it seems

there are stores to fit every price range and every need. And new housing developments offer people the kind of homes they want at a price they can afford. With the new jobs, it seems as though our young people, who not too long ago felt they had to move away to make a decent living, will decide to stay.

VIEW 3

Traffic congestion is growing.

Our community is developing in ways that make us depend on our cars to get around. Most people don't live near where they work or go to school, and public transportation isn't available in many places. The upshot is that we're spending more time in our cars on roads that cannot handle the growing traffic. Elderly people and others who can't drive are often isolated, and many parents feel like chauffeurs to children who need rides from school to soccer practice to friends' houses.

VIEW 4

Racial and economic isolation is worse.

New suburban developments are growing and thriving at the expense of the older parts of our area. Upper and middle class people continue to move out of town and into the suburbs, while the urban core of our area becomes poorer and racially isolated. Even the older, working class suburbs are feeling the pinch because most new jobs and economic activity are in the newer suburbs.

People who live in the core urban areas find it difficult to get to the new jobs being created in the suburbs—and they often can't afford to move to where the jobs are. To make things worse, many better-off suburbs shut out low-income people through zoning codes that prevent affordable housing from being built in their neighborhoods. Whether it is intended to or not, these things create more racial and economic segregation.

VIEW 5

We're putting the environment at risk.

As development speeds up, our community is putting greater pressure on the environment. The urban area is sprawling out into the surrounding farmlands and open areas, pushing out wildlife. Roads, parking lots, and storm drains cover land that was once able to soak up water to replenish the ground water and prevent flooding. Runoff from pavement and chemically treated lawns adds to water pollution problems. More cars on the roads are polluting the air. Our community seems to be growing in ways that make this a less healthy and pleasant place to live.

VIEW 6

Newcomers are improving the community.

Some people like to complain about newcomers changing the way things "have always been," but our community has become a better place with these changes. New businesses and more services are available. More parents are active in school affairs. Community activities such as theater, town festivals, and civic clubs have received a boost of new energy. This feels like a more vibrant, active place to live than it did before.

VIEW 7

Some people are feeling economic pressure.

Parts of our town are booming, but not everyone is sharing in the benefits. People who have lived and worked here for a long time, such as senior citizens and families that depend on local jobs for their livelihoods, are getting shut out of the housing market by rising prices. And much of the new economic development—like the big retail stores at the edge of town—aren't creating the kind of full-time jobs with good wages and benefits that are going to help locals continue to live here.

VIEW 8

New and traditional lifestyles conflict.

People are moving to our community because they like the lifestyle it offers. But many of these newcomers are discovering that they don't like some of the traditional aspects of life here. For example, some people who move into homes near working farms complain to local authorities about the smell of manure or dairy cows, noisy farm equipment running at night, or the use of pesticides. Long-time residents fear their way of life is being threatened as these sorts of situations create growing friction among neighbors.

VIEW 9

Public services are strained.

As more and more people move to our community, local government is having a hard time keeping up with all the demand for public services. Schools are overcrowded and underfunded. The police and fire departments are short on staff and can't always provide the best protection. And it's not just the growing areas that feel the pinch. The whole community suffers as funds for building and maintaining roads across town are stretched thin, and community sewage treatment systems and water supplies are strained.

PART 3 Wrapping up *(30 minutes)*

- What did you learn from this meeting? What new insights did you get from listening to others?
- What are one or two things you would most like to change about this community? What would you like to keep the same?

PREPARE FOR SESSION 2

During the next session, you'll explore why your community is experiencing the changes you talked about in today's discussion. Between now and the next session:

- Pay attention to the different perspectives in your community about growth issues:

  What do your family members, friends, and neighbors think about how the community is changing?

  What's being covered in the media?

- Take a closer look at the growth and development that is happening in your community:

  What kinds of growth and development do you see happening?

  What do you particularly like? Especially dislike?

BEING MINDFUL OF OUR SURROUNDINGS

Many people learn best through experience. Here is one way for you to use your own experiences to bring new insights into your study circle.

Author Tony Hiss believes that the look and feel of our everyday surroundings affect each of us more than we realize. He says it's important to be aware of how our communities are growing and changing because those changes deeply affect each of us. We may feel these changes in our health and happiness, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, how we interact with other people, and how we participate in community life.

Paying attention to our own experiences as we move through our communities each day is a first step in understanding how we react to our surroundings. This understanding can help us change our communities in ways that work for all of us.

AN EXERCISE FOR PAYING ATTENTION TO OUR DAILY EXPERIENCES

Think about one of your favorite places within walking or driving distance from where you live or work. Better yet, go there. Pay attention to what you experience there.

How do you get in touch with what you're experiencing? That's easy! Tony Hiss points out that (even though we don't usually pay attention to it) all of our minds are wired up with special circuits that deeply drink in all the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensations flowing into us at all times—a process he calls 'simultaneous perception.' We use this information to stay in touch, at very deep levels, with other human beings and the rest of creation. And we can deliberately get in touch with this process any time we have the time to relax and take in our surroundings without hurry. As you relax, just try to give equal attention to what your eyes are seeing, your ears hearing, your nose sniffing, and your skin feeling. At that moment, ask yourself:

Questions about your experience

- How do I feel being here?
- What is this place like? Do I notice specific sights, sounds, or smells?
- What else—other than what immediately draws my attention—am I aware of?
- Do I tend to move quickly or slowly through this place? How does my experience change as I walk or drive through it?

Questions about how your experience has changed over time

- Is my experience here different during the daytime, at night, on a weekday, a weekend, a holiday?
- Is my experience different than it used to be? How?
- Do I come here less often than I used to? More often? Why?
- Is anything likely to happen to this place that will change what I can experience here?

You may want to do this exercise several times during the weeks that your study circle meets. You can also use the questions to help you be more aware of everyday experiences. You'll find that you have new ideas and insights to share in your discussions.

Adapted with permission from Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place: A new way of looking at and dealing with our radically changing cities and countryside.* New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

SESSION 2

Why Is Our Community Experiencing These Changes?

As communities grow in different ways, people often disagree about why these changes are happening. Discussing that question is an important step in creating a shared understanding of the problems and opportunities of growth. That shared understanding provides the groundwork for effective solutions that enjoy broad support and commitment.

PART 1 Reflecting on what we're learning *(30 minutes)*

- Since our last meeting, did you have a chance to talk to family members, friends, or neighbors to find out how they feel about the changes the community is going through? What concerns, if any, do they have about the way growth and development are taking place?
- Did you have a chance to look around the community? What did you see? What did you like most about what you saw? What did you like least?

PART 2 Why are these changes happening? *(60 minutes)*

Each of the following views offers a different answer to the question, "Why is our community experiencing this kind of growth?" Each is written in the voice of a person who holds that perspective. Use these views as a starting point for your discussion and for developing your own thoughts.

VIEWS

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE VIEWS

- *Which view is closest to your own? Why? What experiences and beliefs have helped form your views?*
- *Think about a view you don't agree with. What might lead someone else to agree with that view?*
- *What points of view would you like to add?*

VIEW 1

More Americans can choose where and how they live.

It's only natural for people to choose to live and work in places that provide more elbow room. More people are moving to outer suburbs, small towns, and rural areas because new technologies like fax machines, computers, and the Internet make it possible to work away from central offices. Malls and large one-stop shopping centers make it cheaper and more convenient for people with busy schedules to obtain goods and services. If people no longer feel the need to go downtown to work and shop, who's to say that's a bad thing? These patterns of development may look and feel unfamiliar, but they're not necessarily bad. They're just different.

VIEW 2

Efforts to manage growth make things worse.

Our community's development is shaped in large part by the rules that local government sets. Local planning efforts have not kept up with (much less anticipated and creatively dealt with) the kinds of growth that have come our way. In fact, they usually cost more than projected and provide fewer benefits. On top of that, they often make the situation worse than it was before. Attempts to manage growth are more likely to cost taxpayers a lot of money than they are to solve congestion, pollution, and other problems. A big part of the trouble is that the average citizen has been pushed out of local planning. The process tends to be controlled by narrow interests that don't have the whole community in mind.

VIEW 3

Our daily personal choices create problems.

Each one of us makes personal choices that create the patterns of development our community is experiencing. We abandon our towns and cities for homes in the suburbs, making a self-fulfilling prophecy of our feelings that central cities are dangerous, poor, and badly managed. We drive miles to save pennies on toothpaste or deodorant at the super-discount drug store, instead of taking a few minutes to walk to the corner store. We insist on using our cars, even when public transportation is readily available. And we vote against local property taxes that are needed to help our schools and other public services keep up with the demands created by new growth.

VIEW 4

We don't consider the environment.

Too many communities are willing to allow growth that is harmful to the environment. In debates about specific development proposals, environmental concerns often seem less urgent and less important than economic concerns. And it's easy for communities to say that this little bit of water pollution or this little piece of wildlife habitat doesn't matter much. But they all add up. The bottom line is that we are not willing to restrict growth in the short term, even to assure the long-term health of the environment and the well-being of future generations.

VIEW 5

Government policies promote particular types of growth.

Public policies are biased toward particular types of growth. These deeply rooted biases help create problems such as sprawl, traffic congestion, and a mismatch between where workers can afford to live and where they can find jobs. For example:

- ✔ Too many state and federal dollars go to building new roads instead of investing in public transportation. These roads encourage people to spend more time in their cars and to develop areas farther and farther out of town.

- ✔ Taxes, service charges, and environmental regulations can make it difficult to renovate buildings or old industrial sites in already-developed areas. Often, businesses find it easier to build on undeveloped land.
- ✔ Local government zoning codes can make it difficult for working class people to find affordable housing near the many new jobs being created in the booming suburbs. Examples of these codes include requirements that homes be a certain size or have two-car garages.

PART 3 Identifying priority issues *(30 minutes)*

- ♦ When you think back on this discussion and on Session 1, what seem to be the most important issues for the community to address? Which aspects of growth concern us most?
- ♦ If your list could have only one or two issues on it, which ones would you pick? Why?

PREPARE FOR SESSION 3

During the next session, you'll start talking about how your community can make progress on its most important growth issues. Between now and the next session, pay attention to who's doing what to address the challenges of growth:

- ♦ ***What's in the news?***
- ♦ ***What's already happening in your community?***
- ♦ ***How are people talking about new approaches or different policies?***
- ♦ ***What are other towns and cities doing?***

SESSION 3

What Are Our Options For Addressing Growth Issues?

Communities across the country are addressing growth issues in many ways. This session helps you explore some general approaches your community might take.

PART 1 Our community's future *(10 minutes)*

In this part, you will focus on this question:

What are one or two qualities that you most want this community to have?

Qualities may be characteristics your community already has, or they may be qualities that would be new to the community or that could be strengthened.

Your facilitator may lead the group in a brainstorm to get a lot of ideas out. In a brainstorm, there are no right or wrong answers. People can ask questions to help clarify someone's idea, but criticizing or contradicting is not allowed. Each person has a chance to offer one or two qualities. One person writes all the ideas where everyone can see them.

PART 2 Options for our community *(90 minutes)*

Beginning on page 14, you will find examples of approaches that other communities and governments are using to address growth issues. Please keep in mind that they reflect different points of view about the causes and effects of growth, and different ideas about the best way to address growth issues. These approaches also can suggest new ideas for your community.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DISCUSSING THE APPROACHES

- *Which approaches appeal to us and why? What concerns or doubts do we have about them?*
- *Are nearby communities using innovative approaches that seem appealing?*
- *What approach seems likely to take our community in the direction we want to go?*

To explore one approach in more depth, use the questions that accompany each one.

PART 3 Wrapping up *(20 minutes)*

Many study circles invite one or more public officials to join them for Session 4. These questions will help you prepare for the next session:

- What are the most important things to talk about with public officials?
- What are our hopes and concerns for the community when it comes to growth?
- Which strategies seem promising to address our concerns? Why?

Action Approaches From Other Places

APPROACH 1

Use incentives and regulations to guide growth

New development can strain public services like roads and schools, and threaten farmland, open space and other things that people value. Citizens often turn to government to protect the good of the whole community when they see that happening. Some local government leaders are using creative ways to direct new development to areas that can handle its demands. Moreover, many state and federal agencies are using incentives and regulations to help guide growth at the local level.

EXAMPLES

- ***Channeling government funds to areas targeted for growth.*** The State of Maryland has a "Smart Growth" law. It helps communities focus development in existing town centers and other "Smart Growth Areas." State funds will be largely restricted to these areas. That includes money for roads and highways, business and economic development, school construction and renovation, and housing.
- ***Focusing development on old industrial sites and other unused urban land.*** The city of Chicago encourages development on "brownfields"—land that has been contaminated by past activity such as dry cleaning or manufacturing. The city buys abandoned land, pays for the cleanup, and sells the land at low prices to interested developers. New tax revenues from developing the land pay for the investment in cleanup. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and many states also have programs to support this kind of redevelopment.
- ***Charging higher impact fees for development that takes place outside the city center.*** The city of Lancaster, California, charges new developments a fee that helps cover the cost of city services such as law enforcement and street cleaning. The fee increases with the distance from the city center.
- ***Restricting new urban development to a definable area.*** Portland, Oregon, has one of the best known examples of an "urban growth boundary," which was put into place 20 years ago. Inside the boundary, new development is allowed. Outside the boundary, the land is zoned for farms and forests.

QUESTIONS

1. Do enough people agree on what our community should look like for this kind of approach to work? Where would we want to see development directed?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages to relying on government to direct growth?
3. What effects might this approach have on you, personally? On the ability of people who own land to make their own decisions about how the land should be used? On our community's ability to grow?
4. Many proposals for directing growth say we should increase density in certain areas while keeping it down in others. What might this look like in our community? Examples include:
   - ♦ Building townhomes in a neighborhood of single-family homes
   - ♦ Allowing people to rent out apartments in their basements or above garages
   - ♦ Building high-rise apartment buildings
   - ♦ Designing a development with half-acre rather than three-acre lots

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Action Approaches From Other Places

APPROACH 2

Take charge of our economic future

People who live in growing communities often feel out of control, as if nothing they do will make any difference. But many communities are being innovative about drawing on their own resources to protect what's important to them. These locally oriented and controlled approaches expand the community's control over its own development and economic decisions. Often individuals, community groups, and businesses take the lead—but government also can be involved.

EXAMPLES

- ***Creating a community land trust to keep housing affordable.*** In Burlington, Vermont, a nonprofit trust holds land for the benefit of the community. It helps arrange financing so low- and moderate-income families can buy or rent the housing that sits on its land. In this way, the trust enables owners or tenants to rent or buy homes without worrying about rising land prices. It also works with commercial land and buildings.
- ***Building the "home grown" economy.*** In the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, an education organization called the Penn Center is working with islanders to strengthen the local economy and stave off the pressures of development. A folk-art center teaches local arts like quilting and sea-grass basket weaving and helps artisans sell their work. Other projects include a facility to process locally grown produce and a community development corporation.
- ***Investing resources back into the community.*** Community loan funds, for example, can create a long-term source of funding for housing rehabilitation, business start-up, and other projects. A $20,000 loan from a community loan fund enabled a community development corporation (CDC) in Dallas, Texas, to purchase 40 houses that were slated for demolition. Building on that purchase, the CDC has been able to buy, renovate, and lease 50 housing units to families earning less than $12,000 per year.

QUESTIONS

1. What goals would we work toward if we took this approach? Do enough people agree on what's good for our community to make this approach work? Do we have resources to build on?
2. Is this approach likely to assure our community's well-being in the face of the growth we're experiencing?
3. How would our community change if we used our own resources to make sure that community members have access to basics—things like secure and rewarding jobs, living wages, affordable housing, child care, and a healthy environment? Could we make a difference with this kind of approach?
4. What effects might this approach have on your own life? On your feelings about the community?

APPROACH 3

Build regional cooperation

Growth seldom affects only one community at a time. In many metropolitan areas, the urban core often suffers while newer suburbs on the fringe grow and thrive. In other places, efforts to manage growth are overwhelmed by development outside city limits. Other communities find that their plans for growth conflict with the surrounding county's approach. When more than one community is involved, solo efforts to deal with growth issues are not usually successful. Instead, communities are forging alliances in broader regions or creating regional governing bodies. Other communities are working together on a less formal basis.

EXAMPLES

- ***Creating a coalition of business, civic, and government leaders.*** In the Cleveland, Ohio, area, public officials from the city and close-in suburbs have teamed up to create the "First Suburbs Consortium." The consortium is also supported by community, church, and business leaders. It is pushing for changes in state and federal policies that encourage suburban sprawl in the region and add to the problems of the declining urban center.
- ***Pooling tax resources.*** The city of Pittsburgh and other local governments in southwestern Pennsylvania joined together to create the Allegheny Regional Asset District. The district collects funds from a local sales tax and distributes the money to the 128 cities and towns in the region. The money is used for libraries, parks, sports facilities, and cultural organizations. It is also used to reduce property taxes and provide tax relief for senior citizens. Poorer communities receive more revenue from this tax pool than do wealthier communities.
- ***Working together on land-use planning.*** The Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council was formed by eleven communities bordering the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in Ohio. The council has established voluntary guidelines for development along the park boundary. Most of the towns have changed their zoning codes to reflect these guidelines, and landowners and developers usually go along with the council's recommendations.

QUESTIONS

1. Are the benefits and costs of growth the same for everyone in our area? If not, what differences do we see?
2. Do the communities in this area see themselves as being part of a larger region? Do we have any experiences with working together as a region?
3. Does looking at growth regionally make sense for our community? Why or why not?
4. Should communities (or parts of a community) that are doing well take responsibility for helping neighboring areas that are less fortunate? Why or why not?
5. How might working regionally affect our community? What changes might we see in our community's ability to make its own decisions about growth issues?

APPROACH 4

Generate citizen energy and vision

There's one sure thing about growth: it can cause divisions in a community. People often engage in "us versus them" arguments when controversial proposals come up. But once a particular controversy dies down, many people stop participating in community affairs. Getting more citizens to be involved—and to stay involved—is an important part of many communities' efforts to prevent flare-ups and move forward together on growth issues. The change is usually started by citizens who share a concern about what's happening to the community. It often begins with an opportunity for community members to come together to talk about their concerns and hopes for the future.

EXAMPLES

- ***Getting people talking about the future.*** In Red Lodge, Montana, several citizens convened a community workshop. During the two-day meeting, residents talked about the kind of community they want Red Lodge to be. They identified priorities for action and formed citizen working groups to work on the ideas that came out of the workshop.
- ***Mobilizing existing groups.*** The Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, church congregations, or senior citizen groups can be strong voices for your community's quality of life. In Ashland, Wisconsin, realtors distribute information packets to purchasers of waterfront property. The packets help new owners reduce their impacts on the loons that breed and nest in the area's lakes and islands.
- ***Making an inventory of local resources and trends.*** A resort was developed at the mineral springs for which the town of Hot Springs, North Carolina, was named. The town council appointed a committee to study the town's options for dealing with the growth that was expected to follow. The committee began its work by surveying residents and holding public forums to identify the town's most important scenic, historic, and cultural resources.

QUESTIONS

1. How would taking this approach help us address our community's specific concerns about growth? Is it likely to work quickly enough to get ahead of—or even keep up with—the pace of growth and its effects on our community?
2. Will we be able to translate the energy and vision of citizens into meaningful changes?
3. Do we think people will participate? How would each of us, personally, be willing to participate in a citizen-driven effort? What effect might other responsibilities or desires have—for example our families, jobs, recreation, schooling, and so on?
4. How would our lives be different if our community took this approach? Would we have responsibilities that we don't have now?
5. What effect would taking this approach have on the ability of local government to do its job?

APPROACH 5

Reduce our dependence on government to manage growth

Local and regional governments often take the lead in planning for and controlling growth. But some communities aren't willing to give government more authority to tell people how and where to live. Other communities are not convinced that the usual approaches are the most effective or efficient ways to deal with growth problems. Instead, they are achieving community goals by using the market and by encouraging individuals and businesses to take the initiative.

EXAMPLES

- ***Making public transit a private business.*** Many cities have created public transportation systems that are expensive and underused. Some cities are saving money and improving service by deregulating mass transit. That way, private operators can compete with the local public transit agency. For example, in the San Gabriel Valley of California, bus service is competitively contracted out. Since this began, more people are riding the buses and the local government is saving money.
- ***Allowing neighborhoods to control land use.*** Most U.S. cities have zoning codes that restrict certain types of buildings to specific areas. Houston, Texas, is an exception. There, property owners make the decisions that affect the value of the land in each neighborhood. Usually the decisions are made by community or homeowners associations, or by subdivision developers. They often use deed restrictions to control what can or cannot be done on a property. These restrictions are recorded on the property deed and passed on from owner to owner.
- ***Building public schools with private funds.*** In Castro Valley, California, the developer of a large subdivision built an elementary school and donated it to the local school district. In return, the usual $1,500 charge for school fees was waived on each of the 1,700 units in the subdivision. The developer saved money and at the same time, offered the state a lesson in how to reduce school construction costs and time. The school building was completed in just six months, and it cost 35 percent less than it would have if the state had built it.

QUESTIONS

1. How is government action affecting the way our community is growing? Is it contributing to the problems we're experiencing? Is it helping solve or avoid problems?
2. Does it make sense to rely on government to manage growth? Why or why not?
3. What benefits might come from relying more on individual initiative, responsibility, and creativity to shape our community's development? What might the downsides be?
4. Who is likely to benefit from relying less on government to guide growth decisions?
5. What affect would this approach have on our community's ability to plan for its future?

APPROACH 6

Build momentum with a single issue

Communities face a big challenge just to start work on growth issues. The issues often seem too complex to understand or too overwhelming to address. One way to begin is to focus on a single issue that grabs the public's attention and is ripe for generating action. If the community makes progress on that issue, people become aware of other growth-related issues and help create energy for community action.

EXAMPLES

- ***Tackling traffic congestion.*** One way to ease traffic headaches is to make it easier for people to live near where they work and do their errands. In the Seattle area, Key Bank offered employees the opportunity to take jobs at branches closer to where they live. This project reduced commute length and made it easier for people to use other ways of getting to work. Other communities are changing zoning codes so that offices, shops, and homes can be mixed together.
- ***Challenging specific proposals.*** Wal-Mart had to adapt its plans for its first store in Vermont. The company bowed to community pressure against large box stores on the outskirts of Bennington. Wal-Mart set up shop in a renovated department store downtown.
- ***Bringing new life to town centers.*** Restoring a town's historic character can tempt businesses and residents to reconsider their plans to move to the suburbs. In Hot Springs, Arkansas, the city worked with Hot Springs National Park to renovate a six-block downtown area next to the park's bathhouses. Hot Springs created historic preservation guidelines for the district and raised $500,000 through a temporary sales tax to help fund the renovations. Both the National Park Service and the state of Arkansas contributed matching funds.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there a starting point, such as a specific issue, that makes sense for our community? Why? (In some communities, focusing on water quality or supply makes sense. In others, the starting point might be affordable housing, schools, dying downtowns, or preserving open space.)
2. Do most people agree on the importance of any one issue? Is there enough agreement to spark and sustain action?
3. How would taking on this issue help us address the larger issues of growth in our community?
4. Is our community likely to get wrapped up in endless debates about this one issue that will distract us from the larger issues that growth raises?

SESSION 4

Meeting With Public Officials

In this session, you will meet with public officials. You may choose to meet with local or state elected officials, or with your congressional representative or senator. Or you may decide to invite staff from local, state, or federal government departments. If your study circle is part of a community-wide program, you will want to include participants from other study circles, too.

Working on issues related to growth requires cooperation from throughout the community and from different levels of government. You can build this cooperation by listening to how public officials and other community members see the issues and what needs to be done.

PART 1 Preparing to meet with public officials *(30 minutes)*

Your study circle should take time to prepare for the meeting with public officials. It is especially important to do so if your study circle is part of a larger community-wide program. Spend some time reflecting on earlier discussions. Everyone needs to know what to expect and be able to express the views of the whole community.

- The ground rules listed above right address some of the problems that come up when citizens and public officials meet together. Add them to the ground rules you have been using in earlier sessions. Make changes to the list as you see fit.
- Review what you have already discussed in your study circle by using the focus questions on page 21. They will guide your meeting.

GROUND RULES

We agree to:

- Have a give-and-take discussion. We do not lecture or "sell" our point of view.
- Let everyone look at all sides of an issue. No one has to have an instant answer.
- Keep the discussion focused on the issue.
- Allow the news media to attend the meeting only if we all agree. Comments during the meeting are "off the record" and not to be used in the media.

PART 2 Talking with public officials *(60–75 minutes)*

When the public officials join your meeting, review the ground rules again and see if anyone, including the public officials, wants to add anything to the list. Then, to get the discussion going, two or three people should share what

they have learned from the study circles so far. Keep these comments brief and related to the focus questions. This will help keep people relaxed and on track.

Next, open up the discussion so everyone can participate by sharing their own ideas and asking each other questions. Use the focus questions to guide the talk.

PART 3 Wrapping up

(15–30 minutes)

To close the meeting, spend some time reflecting on what you have learned from each other during the discussion. Make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak.

PREPARE FOR SESSION 5

By the end of this session, you may have a clearer sense of the possibilities and challenges your community has in addressing issues related to growth. Between now and the next meeting, you might want to:

- ***Read "What Can One Person Do?" and "What Can Our Community Do?" in Session 5, pages 23–26. They provide ideas for action.***
- ***Think about what you can do on your own—and what you can do with others—to move toward the kind of future you want for your community.***

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are our hopes and concerns for the community when it comes to growth?
2. What are the most promising ideas for change? Why?
3. What questions or doubts do we have about these ideas?
4. How can government help our community realize our hopes and address our concerns about growth?
5. What questions do we have for our public officials? Why are these questions important?

SESSION 5

Shaping The Future: What Can We Do In Our Community?

Towns and cities that are grappling with growth are finding that everyone needs to be part of the solution to community problems. Broad public involvement is an important part of making the community a genuinely good place to live.

You have already engaged in a form of action by coming together to learn from each other and share ideas. Finding ways to keep talking and include more people from the community is a very good next step. Study circles often lead to action groups in which some people decide to put their ideas from the study circles into action.

This session will help you think about actions that address the issues you have discussed in earlier study circle sessions.

PART 1 Reflecting on our meeting with officials

(15 minutes)

- What did we learn from our conversation with officeholders?
- What new questions or concerns came up? What new opportunities do we see?

PART 2 Thinking together about how we can make a difference

(45 minutes)

Think about actions you can take individually, and actions that need the broader community involved. Look over the action ideas, which begin on page 23, to spark your thinking.

1. Think back to the issues and concerns discussed in our study circle. What would you most like to see people in our community work on? Why?
2. What can you, personally, do to make a difference? Why is this action important to you?
3. What actions might our community take? What ideas from other communities seem promising? Why do you think these actions will help make our community a better place to live?
4. What efforts are already going on in our community to address these issues? What are individuals, businesses, community organizations, government, and other groups doing?

PART 3 Setting priorities for action *(45 minutes)*

Now, decide how to begin organizing for action, and how to prepare for an action forum.

1. What two or three ideas seem most practical and useful?
2. How can we turn these ideas into reality? What kinds of information, support, or help do we need in order to take these steps?
3. What resources are already in place that could help us move ahead? Where is our community already strong?

4. Who could be involved? How can we reach them? What resources can we tap outside the community?
5. What is our next step?
6. Will we be meeting with other study circles to share ideas for action? If so, what ideas do we want to present?

PART 4 Reflecting on our study circle *(15 minutes)*

- What new insights have you gained by participating in this study circle? What has made the biggest impact on how you think about growth? on your actions in the community?
- What did you find most valuable about the study circle?
- What worked well in your discussions? What didn't work very well? What changes would you suggest for future study circles?

ACTION IDEAS

These ideas reflect different views about growth issues. Use them as a resource to jump-start your own thinking. For example, ask yourself which action steps best fit your views about growth and its effect on your community.

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

Sometimes it seems that one person can't do much to make a difference in the community. But everything that happens is built on individual actions, and each person's actions do matter! These individual actions can help your community grow into a place you are proud to call home.

- ***Be active in neighborhood and community groups.*** These grassroots organizations can help your community take charge of its future and make a big difference in people's lives.
- ***When you vote, think about what you want your community to look like over the long term.*** Consider your community's future when you decide how you feel about issues like bonds for purchasing open space, zoning changes, development impact fees, privatizing bus service, or regional government cooperation. Learn what these proposals might mean for your community.

- ***Express your thoughts.*** Write letters to the editor, communicate with your public officials, talk about growth issues with neighbors, friends, family, and co-workers. Keep the dialogue and the learning going. Continue your study circle.
- ***Be an involved citizen.*** Participate in public meetings on growth and related issues. Volunteer for citizen task forces. Join in community visioning efforts and follow-up actions.
- ***Pay attention to how you travel around your community.*** Think about how the forms of transportation you use affect your community, and your own feelings about where you live and how you spend your time. If you want to make a change, you might look into other forms of transportation, flexible working arrangements that cut down on the need to commute, and other ways of reducing your need to travel around.
- ***Support public officials when they take a constructive approach to resolving growth issues.*** Be a part of a constituency that supports moving toward your community's highest aspirations.
- ***Consider the future of the community when you make business decisions.*** Think about the effects of the decisions that you make about your own property and investments. Where will you locate your business? Can you hire and purchase locally? Should—or how should—you develop a piece of land? Where will you live in relationship to where you work? Will you renovate an historic building?

WHAT CAN OUR COMMUNITY DO?

The approaches outlined in Session 3 offer examples of what communities across the country are doing to make growth work for them. The following ideas might spark new ideas about the kinds of actions your community could take.

- ***Decide what's important to protect and promote.*** Some communities in Iowa, for example, use "corn suitability" ratings to guide zoning and planning decisions so the best farmland is protected. In Los Angeles, the city and the L.A. Metropolitan Transit Authority are working together to cut down on sprawl and traffic congestion by encouraging high density development around transit stations.
- ***Preserve open space.*** Use conservation easements to provide a financial incentive for owners not to develop their land. Pass bond issues or a local sales tax for purchasing open space and park land. Some state governments and federal agencies make money available to local governments and private land trusts to protect farm and forest land, natural areas, and other open space. In the Chicago area, local and state governments and nongovernmental organizations are working together to create a region-wide network of linked open spaces.
- ***Change zoning codes to reflect your community's goals.*** For example, you might decide to remove zoning codes that require new developments to provide off-street parking. This change could cut the cost of new

housing developments, let the market decide how much parking space to provide and how to pay for it, and help make your community friendlier for pedestrians and alternative transportation. In Portland, Oregon, a recent permit for a downtown low-income housing development waived the requirement to provide off-street parking. That waiver cut about $10,000 from the construction cost of each apartment.

- ***Link housing with other community issues.*** Residents of Eastside Community in Indiana-polis, Indiana, organized a community development corporation to obtain private funding for a community housing project. The group repaired old homes and sold them for a profit. This revenue was used to make investments in small, locally owned businesses and to build an industrial park. The first loan made by the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund in Concord enabled a group of 13 families to buy the mobile home park where they lived. This purchase kept the land from being developed into high-priced condominiums.
- ***Charge road-use fees to reduce traffic on congested highways.*** Making the fee highest during rush hour and very low or nothing at night encourages people to find other ways to get where they're going, especially during the busiest times. This "congestion pricing" is being used by a private road company in Orange County, California. The company built a two-lane highway paralleling a crowded freeway. People using the highway must buy radio transponders that send out signals picked up at toll areas along the road. The toll is either charged to the user's credit card or deducted from a prepaid amount. Highway users are willing to pay for the convenience and speed of driving on this less-crowded road.
- ***Organize to challenge a specific proposal.*** When local officials approved plans for a large shopping mall and office complex next to Manassas National Battlefield Park in Virginia, community members created a broad-based coalition of Civil War buffs, veterans groups, landowners, and conservationists from the area. This local group reached out across the country with their campaign, "Save the Battlefield." In less than a year, Congress added the land to the park.
- ***Strengthen neighborhoods.*** Especially in urban areas, strong neighborhoods are the building blocks of a healthy community. Community development corporations in Chicago have taken the lead in renovating housing in urban neighborhoods, developing industrial and commercial real estate, and marketing the neighborhoods' advantages. One neighborhood organization turned an old auto parts warehouse into a small business incubator where new businesses share technical support and office equipment. Once businesses have outgrown their need for the incubator, they are encouraged to continue to do business in the neighborhood.

- ***Get neighbors talking.*** A group of six ranching families near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, got together to talk about how to protect their ranches from encroaching development. They ended up putting conservation easements on 2,800 acres of land.
- ***Help community members stay ahead of the rising cost of living.*** Support efforts to reduce the taxes and regulations that may make it difficult for companies to invest profitably in your community. For example, the city government of Indianapolis, Indiana, created a Regulatory Study Commission to eliminate outdated and counterproductive rules that were stifling economic development. Another approach is to start a local currency system, such as those begun by Madison, Wisconsin, Ithaca, New York, and Bozeman, Montana. Local currency allows people to trade skills, services, and products for currency that allows them to buy what they want from other community members and many local merchants.
- ***Reach beyond the traditional "movers and shakers" to develop a broad base of energy and support.*** In Maryville, Tennessee, the nonprofit Foothills Land Conservancy raised $1.3 million to buy a large tract of land at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Media appeals and a color brochure helped convince more than 3,300 people—including 100 school and youth groups—to donate money for protecting this land from development.
- ***Create ways for officials from different levels of government to exchange information and build better working relationships.*** Public officials from Mohave County, Arizona, began convening forums that bring together officials from local governments, state and federal agencies, and Indian tribes. The forums have resulted in cooperative agreements among governments and the passage of a new state law giving the county more authority to manage growth.
- ***Strengthen the local economy to buffer the effects of growth.*** In Durham, North Carolina, the Center for Community Self-Help started a credit union and loan fund with $77 raised by a bake sale. Among other services, the center and its related financial institutions (which have grown tremendously since the bake sale days) provide assistance and loans for starting worker-owned businesses.

GLOSSARY

Affordable housing
Homes or apartments that most people living in an area can afford to purchase or rent. Governments often define it as housing that someone can afford who makes a certain percentage of the area's median income—often around 70 percent. In many communities, the issue of affordable housing centers on three questions: Do employees of local businesses have convenient access to housing they can afford? Can long-standing local residents like senior citizens remain in their communities? Will housing remain affordable over the long term?

Alternative transportation
Methods of travel other than car. These methods include public transit such as rail, bus, and subway, and individual modes such as bicycling and walking. Sometimes commuter van services and carpooling are considered alternative transportation because they offer an alternative to single-passenger commuting.

Bond financing
Long-term financing used by local governments. Bonds are sold to investors and must be paid back, with interest, usually over a period of ten or twenty years. They can be used to finance many community projects such as schools, open space preservation, libraries, and fire stations.

Brownfields
Unused, often abandoned, properties that have been contaminated by previous use. Many brownfield sites can be restored to levels acceptable for commercial or industrial use. They are also attractive to developers because brownfields are usually served by roads, water, and sewer. However, liability concerns often keep developers and businesses from using this land.

Community development corporations (CDC)
Community-based organizations that work on issues ranging from revitalizing neighborhoods and commercial areas to cultural activities and job training. They can be controlled by the community's residents, often through membership, but sometimes through a confederation of other community organizations that band together to create the CDC.

Community land trust
Nonprofit corporation created to hold land for the benefit of a community. Community land trusts are democratically structured and anyone in the community can be a member. Other types of land trusts may hold land for a specific reason, such as conservation or keeping the land in agricultural production. These types of trusts do not need to be governed by the community in which they hold land.

Community loan fund
Nonprofit corporation, or a program of a nonprofit, that makes loans for projects within a community. Community loan funds often provide loans and technical assistance to groups and projects that cannot get funding through more traditional sources. They can serve as intermediaries between community investors and borrowers. Community loan funds get money by borrowing from individuals and institutions such as banks or foundations.

Conservation easement
Agreement between a landowner and government agency or nonprofit organization (such as a land trust). The agreement limits the landowner's ability to develop land, often in exchange for cash and/or reduced property taxes. Conservation easements work because the legal right to use land in certain

ways can be separated from physical ownership of the land. For example, a conservation easement on a ranch might allow the owner to continue grazing cattle on the land, but prohibit selling land for housing developments. Easements can have effect for a limited time or in perpetuity.

Density
Proportion of people or residences to a given amount of space, such as the number of residences per acre. Maximum or minimum density of development is often specified in zoning codes. Some local governments link allowable densities to other important public benefits like affordable housing or the protection of open space. For example, in return for building low- or moderate-income housing or preserving open space within the development, a developer might be given a "density bonus." This bonus allows the developer to build more housing units per acre than typically allowed under zoning provisions.

Development fees
Fees that local governments charge for new developments. They support public services (fire and police protection or water and sewage treatment) or construction of new facilities (schools, roads, or parks). These fees can be a one-time charge collected from developers, or a longer-term fee collected from residents of a new development.

Edge city
Urban center that has grown up at the edge of an established city. Author Joel Garreau coined this phrase, which he used as the title of his 1991 book about this new urban form. He notes that "they contain all the functions a city ever has, albeit in a spread-out form that few have come to recognize for what it is." According to Garreau, edge cities differ from old-fashioned suburbs in that they have plenty of office and retail space and "more jobs than bedrooms." They are perceived as being one place, although the boundaries may be fuzzy; and they have developed their "city" characteristics within the last thirty years.

Inner suburbs
Communities adjacent to large cities, often formed in the years after World War II when middle-class families moved out from the city to new homes in new suburbs. Over time, the economies of many inner suburbs have declined and their middle-class residents have moved to newer communities farther away from the city center.

Land trust
See *community land trust.*

Land-use planning
Local government activity that lays out policies and standards governing the future physical development of a city or county. The general plan (or town plan) is an overall blueprint for development based on the community's goals. Often the general plan of the city or county is supplemented by more specific community or neighborhood plans. Plans are updated periodically. (See *zoning.*)

Local (or community) currency
Legal currency, issued by the people of a community to increase the local money supply and improve their ability to provide for their own needs with local resources. Local currencies are spent within the community among individuals and businesses who agree to accept them. They are often denominated in hours-of-labor (and are sometimes called "hours") but can also be linked to the federal currency (for example, an "hour" might be worth $10).

Metropolitan area
City and its surrounding area. Metropolitan areas are defined in different ways, such as by the extent of city services such as water and sewer or a shared public transit system. The U.S. Census Bureau defines metropolitan areas in terms of certain population levels. No matter what the definition, the cities,

suburbs, and other communities in metropolitan areas have strong economic ties and other interests in common.

Open space
Land largely free of residential and industrial development. This land may have a variety of values for people and communities, including wildlife habitat, recreation access, and esthetic enjoyment. Farm lands and community parks are generally considered to be open space.

Regionalism
View that a city and its surrounding area are a single economic unit, despite the many political jurisdictions that divide the region. Regional connections include environmental and cultural links, roads and highways, shared public services, and other ties. Regionalists say that collaboration among the city, suburbs, surrounding rural areas, and towns will improve the well-being of the entire area. (See *metropolitan area.*)

Sprawl
Low-density development at the edges of cities and towns that spreads out into previously undeveloped land. Sprawl often consists of "strips" of commercial development along major roadways and highway interchanges, and spread-out residential developments, usually of detached single family homes. In rural areas, residential sprawl may have little relation to a town center. Some people believe that "sprawl" unfairly labels a growth pattern that Americans have been choosing for decades.

Subdivision
Large piece of land that is divided into smaller lots on which houses are built. Homes in subdivisions are often similar in style and cost. They are serviced by roads, utilities, and other public services that were planned for and provided by the original developer. In most states and counties, subdivisions over a certain size must follow particular government regulations.

Suburb
Residential area located outside of a city or town. Some suburbs have their own business districts with shopping and offices.

Sustainable development
Development that satisfies current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and aspirations. Advocates of sustainability are concerned with social equity, and economic and environmental health.

Tax credits (or breaks)
Reduced tax burden that promotes certain types of development or investment. These tax reductions may be written into tax codes governing everything from local or state property taxes to federal income taxes.

Zoning
Local codes that govern the use and development of property. Zoning usually divides a community into "zones" that allow only certain types of development. Performance zoning is another approach. It relies on a case-by-case review of proposed developments using detailed "performance standards," which specify how developments should be designed and constructed. (See *land-use planning.*)

RESOURCES

For Further Discussion And Action

This is a sampling of the many resources available to inform your study circle discussions and to move beyond your study circle to more learning, discussion, and action. Contact information is current as of November 1998.

ORGANIZATIONS

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO)
25 S. Ewing, Suite 214
Helena, MT 59601
Phone 406.443.7272
E-mail aero@desktop.org
Dedicated to promoting sustainable resource use and rural community vitality.

American Farm Bureau Federation
225 Touhy Ave.
Park Ridge, IL 60068
Phone 847.685.8600
Web site www.fb.com
Active in local, state, national, and international issues that affect the farming community.

American Farmland Trust
1920 N Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.659.5170
Web site www.farmland.org
Works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote environmentally sound farming practices.

American Planning Association
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.872.0611
Web site www.planning.org
Promotes planning and land use that meets economic, environmental, and community development needs.

Cascade Policy Institute
813 SW Alder Street, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97205
Phone 503.242.0900
Web site www.cascadepolicy.org
Promotes answers to Oregon's public policy questions from a limited-government, free-market perspective.

Center for Cooperatives
University of Wisconsin
230 Taylor Hall
427 Lorch Street
Madison, WI 53703-1503
Phone 608.262.3981
Studies and promotes cooperative action as a means of meeting economic and social needs of people.

The Center for Living Democracy
RR #1, Black Fox Road
Brattleboro, VT 05301
Phone 802.254.1234
Web site www.livingdemocracy.org
Supports grassroots efforts to regenerate our democracy.

Center for Neighborhood Technology
2125 West North Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647
Phone 773.278.4800
Web site www.cnt.org
Promotes public policies, new resources, and accountable authority that support sustainable, just and vital urban communities.

Equity Trust
539 Beech Pond Rd.
Voluntown, CT 06384
Phone 860.376.6174
Supports the development of community land trusts and community supported agriculture.

Greater Yellowstone Coalition
P.O. Box 1874
Bozeman, MT 59771
Phone 406.586.1593
Web site www.desktop.org/gyc
Publishes *Tools for Managing Growth in the Greater Yellowstone Area*, which outlines growth management tools appropriate for communities across the country.

Harbinger Institute
P.O. Box 689
Bridger, MT 59014
Phone 406.662.3244
E-mail harbinger@mcn.net
Provides consulting and training services that support community, organizational, and personal development.

Institute for Community Economics
57 School Street
Springfield, MA 01105-1331
Phone 413.746.8660
Helps low-income communities address fundamental problems related to lack of control over land, housing, and capital.

Institute for Cooperative Community Development
P.O. Box 16193
Manchester, NH 03106
Phone 603.644.3124
Helps communities construct competent, democratically-controlled, and results-oriented development organizations.

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol St., NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-4201
Phone 202.289.4262
Web site www.icma.org
Professional and educational association of city and county officials working to strengthen the quality of local government. Publishes materials and sponsors a variety of programs geared toward educating and connecting local administrators.

Joint Center for Sustainable Communities
The National Association of Counties
440 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone 202.393.6226
OR
US Conference of Mayors
1620 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone 202.293.7330
Web site www.usmayors.org/sustainable
Helps communities become more self-sufficient and sustainable by providing local elected officials with advice, information, and financial support.

Land Trust Alliance
1319 F Street, NW, Suite 501
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.638.4725
Web site www.lta.org
Supports conservation in communities across the country by providing information, training, and resources to people who work through voluntary land trust organizations.

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
113 Brattle Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone 617.661.3016
Studies and teaches land policy, including land economics and land taxation.

The Local Government Commission
1414 K Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone 916.448.1198
Web site www.lgc.org
Provides technical assistance to local governments working to create and sustain healthy environments, strong economies, and social equity.

National Association of Home Builders
1201 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone 202.822.0200
Web site www.nahb.com
Provides technical assistance to builders and lobbies Congress on behalf of the construction and homebuilding industries.

National Association of Regional Councils
1700 K Street NW, Suite 1300
Washington, DC 20006
Phone 202.457.0710
Web site www.narc.org
Offers technical assistance, educational services, and public policy support to local government officials.

National Civic League
1445 Market Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80202-1728
Phone 303.571.4343
Web site www.ncl.org
Provides technical assistance, publishing, and research to foster the practice of collaborative problem solving and democratic decision making.

National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.626.3000
Web site www.nlc.org
Offers training, technical assistance, and information to municipal officers to help them improve the quality of local government.

National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.588.6000
Dedicated to preserving the nation's cultural heritage through information, technical assistance, research, and advocacy on preservation-based community revitalization.

1000 Friends of Oregon
534 SW Third Ave., Suite 300
Portland, OR 97204
Phone 503.497.1000
Web site www.teleport.com/~winchest/test/homepag1.html
Focuses on land use, protection of agricultural and forest lands, community growth, and citizen participation in land use, planning and development.

Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy
755 Sansome Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94111
Phone 415.989.0833
Web site www.pacificresearch.org
Advocates policies that emphasize free economy, private initiative, and limited government on issues such as education, the environment, and social welfare.

Partners for Livable Communities
1429 21st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.887.5990
Web site www.ncl.org/anr/partners/plc.htm
Committed to improving civic life through economic development and social equity.

President's Council on Sustainable Development
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.408.5296
Web site www.whitehouse.gov/PCSD
Advises the President on sustainable development, promotes new approaches to integrate economic, environmental, and equity issues, conducts outreach to educate the public on the importance of a more sustainable America.

Program for Community Problem Solving
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
Phone 202.783.2961
Helps communities develop a civic culture that nurtures and supports community problem solving.

Regional Civic Organization Network
50 Public Square, Suite 843
Cleveland, OH 44113
Phone 216.241.3340
Serves as a clearinghouse of information for regional organizations looking to share approaches and solutions to regional problems.

Rocky Mountain Institute
1739 Snowmass Creek Road
Snowmass, CO 81654-9199
Phone 970.927.3851
Web site www.rmi.org
Fosters the efficient and sustainable use of resources as a path to global security.

Rural Economic Policy Program
The Aspen Institute
1333 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Suite 1070
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.736.5800
Web site www.aspeninst.org/dir/polpro/REPP/REPP1.html
Fosters collaborative learning, leadership, and innovation to advance rural community and economic development in the U.S.

Sierra Business Council
Box 2428
Truckee, CA 96160
Phone 916.582.4800
E-mail info@sbcouncil.org
Publishes *Planning for Prosperity: Building Successful Communities in the Sierra Nevada*, which covers a wide range of development issues that are useful in other rural areas.

Small Towns Institute
Third and Poplar
PO Box 517
Ellensburg, WA 98926
Phone 509.925.1830
Provides information on small-town living, focusing on historic preservation, employment resources, community development, and environmental programs.

Smart Growth Network
USEPA
Urban and Economic Development Division
Washington, DC 20460
Phone 202.260.2750
Membership Phone 202.962.3591
Web site www.smartgrowth.org
Provides a forum for member organizations to create coalitions, share information, and facilitate smart growth initiatives across the country. Publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, *Getting Smart!*

Sonoran Institute
7290 E. Broadway Blvd., #M
Tucson, AZ 85710
Phone 520.290.0828
E-mail sonoran@igc.apc.org
Promotes community-based strategies that preserve the ecological integrity of protected lands while meeting the economic aspirations of adjoining landowners and communities.

Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC)
PO Box 203
Pomfret, CT 06258
Phone 860.928.2616
E-mail scrc@neca.com
Helps communities organize study circles — small group, democratic, highly participatory discussions.

Surface Transportation Policy Project
1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036
Phone 202.466.2636
Web site www.transact.org
Aims to ensure that transportation policy and investments help conserve energy, protect environmental and esthetic quality, strengthen the economy, promote social equity, and make communities more livable.

The Thoreau Institute
14417 SE Laurie
Oak Grove, OR 97267
Phone 503.652.7049
Web site www.ti.org
Conducts research, education, and consulting to find ways to protect the environment without big government.

Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson St., NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20007-5201
Phone 202.624.7000
Direct research questions to Rick Davis, information specialist–*Phone* 202.624.7117
Web site www.uli.org/
Provides information on urban planning, growth, and development.

WEB SITES

In tandem with the web sites for organizations listed above, these sites offer a sampling of Internet resources on growth and community development.

Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development
www.sustainable.doe.gov

Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution
www.brook.edu/ES/URBANCEN/URBAN_hp.htm

Citistates Group
www.citistates.com

Civic Practices Network
www.cpn.org

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Resource Page
www.ezec.gov/index.html

EPA Transportation Partners: Links Between Transportation and the Environment
www.epa.gov/tp

Green Mountain Institute for Environmental Democracy
www.gmied.org

ISTEA information and links to Surface Transportation Policy Project
www.istea.org

Planner's Web: City and Regional Planning Resources
www.plannersweb.com

Sustainable Communities Network
www.sustainable.org

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.hud.gov

U.S. Department of Transportation
www.dot.gov

University of Arizona College of Agriculture, Water Resources Research Center
ag.arizona.edu/partners

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Congressional Exchange

1120 G Street NW • Suite 730
Washington DC 20005

Phone 202.393.1441
Fax 202.626.4978
E-mail congex@congex.org

This Busy Citizen's guide is a handout
for study circle participants.
A companion manual for organizers
and facilitators is also available from
Congressional Exchange.

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